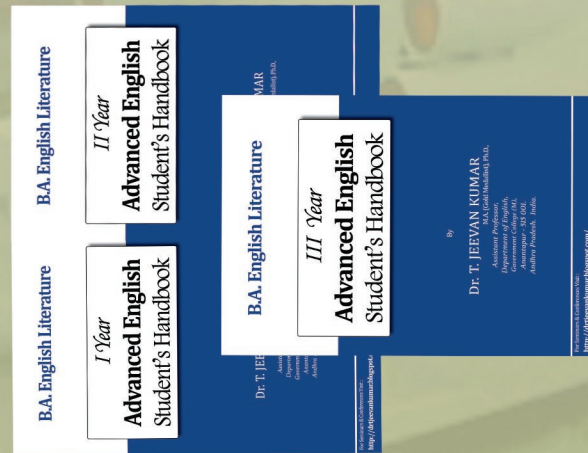


## **A Biographical Note**

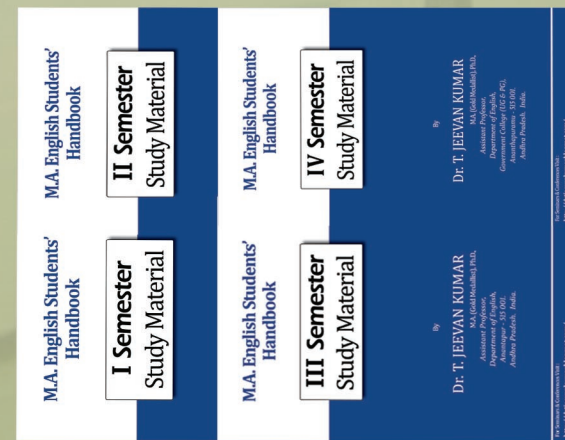
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**II Year Advanced English**

**Dr.T.Jeevan Kumar**

**B.A. English**

**Cogito ergo sum**

# **B.A. English Literature**

## *II Year* **Advanced English Students' Handbook**

*Read to Learn.*

*Learn to Live.*

*Think to Survive.*

By

**Dr. T. JEEVAN KUMAR**

M.A. (Gold Medallist), Ph.D.,

Assistant Professor,

Department of English,

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Ananthapuramu - 515 001.

Andhra Pradesh. India.

For Seminars & Conferences Visit :

<http://drtjeevankumar.blogspot.com/>

# B.A. English Literature

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*II Year*

# Advanced English

## Student's Handbook

*Prepared by*

**Dr. T. Jeevan Kumar,**

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**A Teacher** knows no finer task than to

- ✓ Infuse and impart the value based education which dispels man's ignorance
- ✓ Preach and practice moral values
- ✓ Disseminate impartial and meaningful instruction
- ✓ Exhibit passion for teaching
- ✓ Motivate, inspire, properly guide, and be a role model
- ✓ Speak the language of humanity

**A good Teacher** loves his subject. **A better Teacher** loves his pupils.

**The Best Teacher** loves both.

## **PREFACE**

As any work is not the result of any single writer I wish to express my gratitude to all the persons who have helped me in the preparation of this book. First, let me at the outset, thank my teachers and mentors Prof. P. Bayapa Reddy and Dr. P. Satyanarayana, for their relentless cooperation and encouragement in preparing this book.

The book caters the needs of the students of B.A. English literature studying in the State of Andhra Pradesh in general and in the affiliated colleges of Sri Krishnadevaraya University, Ananthapuramu, in particular. The summaries of some of the texts are extracted from the cyber world. The material, criticism which is provided in this book may be of immense help to the students while preparing for the competitive exams like Junior/Degree Lecturers, School Assistant in English, and Secondary Grade Teacher.

I owe much to my parents, Smt. Rajeswari and Sri Sankar Narayana, and to my beloved wife Sailaja for their constant help and great assistance while preparing this book.

In spite of many efforts to present the book without any errors, some errors might have crept in. So if you come across some mistakes you may bring it to my notice.

**Dr. T. Jeevan Kumar**

**Sri Krishnadevaraya University :: Ananthapuramu**  
**Syllabus of Second Year Advanced English**  
**Paper II – Poetry, Drama, Essay, and Novel (w.e.f. 2001-02)**

**Unit – 1      (A)      Poetry from the Elizabethan Age to the Pre-Romantic Age**

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2. Characteristics of Metaphysical Poetry
3. Theme of Love in Metaphysical Poetry
4. Influence of Renaissance and Reformation on Milton
5. Classical Allusions in Milton's Poetry
6. Features of Neo-Classical Poetry
7. Mock-Heroic Poetry
8. Augustan Satire and its attributes
9. Precursors of Romantic Poetry

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2. Milton                        -              "L' Allegro"
3. Donne                        -              "The Sun Rising"
4. Pope                          -              Cantos I & II from "The Rape of the Lock"
5. William Blake              -              "The School Boy"

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2. Tragic Flaw
3. The Rise of Comedy of Humours
4. Shakespearean Tragedy
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6. Restoration Comedy
7. Comedy of Manners
8. Dryden's Defence of English Drama

**(B)      Drama Prescribed**

1. Shakespeare              -              *Othello*

**Unit – 3      (A)      Prose: Origin and Development of the Essay and its Kinds**

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2. Kinds of Essays:
  - a. Descriptive Essays                      b. Narrative Essays
  - c. Reflective Essays                        d. Imaginative Essays
  - e. Expository Essays
3. Personal Essays of Charles Lamb

4. 18<sup>th</sup> Century Essay exposing the follies and foibles of society
5. Development of Literary Periodicals and Magazines in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries

**(B) Essays Prescribed**

1. Francis Bacon - "Of Studies" and "Of Youth and Age"
2. Richard Steele - "On Judicious Flattery"
3. Charles Lamb - "Dream Children"
4. G.K. Chesterton - "On Lying in Bed"

**Unit – 4 (A) Fiction: Origin and Development of the Novel**

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2. The Picaresque Novel
3. Point of View in Fiction
4. The Epistolary Novel
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6. Aspects of the Novel
7. The Novel of Character
8. The Growth of Realism in Fiction

**(B) Novel Prescribed**

1. Jane Austen - *Pride and Prejudice*

**Reference Books Suggested**

1. Dryden's *Essay on Dramatic Poetry*
2. Ian Jack's *Augustan Satire*
3. Bonamy Dobree's *Restoration Comedy*
4. C.S. Lewis' *English Theatre in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century*
5. E.A. Boas' *The Elizabethan Tragedy*
6. Bredvold's *The Intellectual Milieu of John Dryden*
7. Helen Gardner's *John Donne: A Collection of Critical Essays*
8. Hugh Walker's *The English Essay and Essayists*
9. M.H. Abrams' *A Glossary of Literary Terms*
10. E.M. Forster's *Aspects of the Novel*
11. E.A. Baker's *The English Novel*
12. Wayne C. Booth's *The Rhetoric of Fiction*
13. Oliver Elton's *A Survey of English Literature*



**PAPER II – POETRY, DRAMA, ESSAY, AND NOVEL**  
**MODEL QUESTION PAPER**

**Time: 3 Hrs.**

**Max. Marks: 100**

- 1. a) Write short notes on any TWO of the following: (2 x 5 = 10)**
- i. What are the characteristics of metaphysical poetry?
  - ii. What is the influence of renaissance and reformation of Milton?
  - iii. What are the features of Neo-Classical poetry?
  - iv. Classical Allusions in Milton's Poetry.
- b) Answer any ONE of the following: (1x 15 = 15)**
- i. "The Rape of the Lock" is a Mock-Epic. Discuss.
  - ii. Critically appreciate the poem "The Canonization"
  - iii. Bring out the theme of Blake's poem "The School Boy."
- 2. a) Write short notes on any TWO of the following: (2 x 5 = 10)**
- i. Comedy of Manners
  - ii. Restoration Comedy
  - iii. Dryden's Defence of English Drama
  - iv. The Aristotle Concept of Tragedy
- b) Answer any ONE of the following: (1x15 = 15)**
- i. Sketch the character of Othello.
  - ii. Discuss *Othello* as a Tragedy of love and jealousy.
  - iii. Sketch the character of Emilia.
- 3. a) Write short notes on any TWO of the following: (2 x 5 = 10)**
- i. Narrative Essays
  - ii. Personal Essays of Charles Lamb
  - iii. Development of literary periodicals magazines in the 19<sup>th</sup> century
  - iv. Reflective Essays
- b) Answer any ONE of the following: (1x15 = 15)**
- i. Comment on the prose style of Charles Lamb
  - ii. Write a critical appreciation "Of Youth and Age"
  - iii. Write an appreciation of Chesterton essay "On Lying in Bed."
- 4. a) Write short notes on any TWO of the following: (2 x 5 = 10)**
- i. Picaresque Novel
  - ii. Origins of the novel in the 18<sup>th</sup> century
  - iii. Aspects of the Novel
  - iv. The Epistolary Novel
- b) Answer any ONE of the following in about 150 words: (1x15 = 15)**
- i. Sketch the Character of Darcy.
  - ii. Describe the role played by Gardiners in the novel *Pride and Prejudice*.
  - iii. How does Jane Austen portray customs and manners through her novel *Pride and Prejudice*?



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**PAPER II – POETRY, DRAMA, ESSAY, AND NOVEL**  
**Unit 1 (A) – Background**  
**Poetry from the Elizabethan Age to the Pre-Romantic Age**

---

**The Elizabethan Sonnet**

The Sonnet, may be regarded as an invention of 13<sup>th</sup> century Italy, slowly won the favour of English poets. But the English sonnets were first written, in imitation of the Italian, by Sir Thomas Wyatt and the earl of Surrey. Then, writing sonnets became an imperious and universal habit, a conventional recreation, a modish artifice of gallantry and compliment. No poetic aspirant between 1590 and 1600 failed to try his skill on this poetic instrument. During those ten years, more sonnets were penned in England than in any other decade.

Later, Sir Phillip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, and William Shakespeare, in varying degrees, invested this poetic form with unquestionable beauty. The efforts of this great trio influenced their contemporaries like Daniel, Drayton and Constable, which lends to the Elizabethan sonnet aesthetic interest. Shakespeare, above all, breathed into the sonnet a lyric melody and a meditative energy which no writer of any country has surpassed. He utilized and popularized the sonnet with the declamatory couplet. His popularity springboarded the sonnet to a prominent place in English literature and become the 2<sup>nd</sup> dominant sonnet form along side the Petrarchan or Italian Sonnet. It is for this reason, the Elizabethan Sonnet, sometimes called the English Sonnet or The Shakespearean Sonnet.

The Elizabethan Sonnet is usually found in three quatrains ending with a rhyming couplet, which is often the loudest, most powerful part of the sonnet. It is written in iambic pentameter with a metre. It is rhymed with up to 7 rhymes. It's rhyme scheme is *abab cdcd efef gg*. It illustrates the temper of the time. It bears graphic witness to the Elizabethan tendency to borrow from foreign literary effort.

### Characteristics of Metaphysical Poetry

According to Dorothy Eagle (Read this in *Oxford Companion to English Literature*),

The term 'metaphysical' was first adapted by Dr. Johnson for the group of the 17<sup>th</sup> century poets who reacted against the conventions of the Elizabethan love poetry.

John Donne, Andrew Marvell, George Herbert, Henry Vaughan, Richard Crashaw are some of the metaphysical poets who shared a bold use of such figures of speech as striking and frequently extended similes, metaphors, or analogies (known as 'conceits'). Though there are many poets one of the earliest and the most influential of the Metaphysical poets is John Donne.

In his review of Grierson's edition of *Metaphysical Poets*, T.S. Eliot discovered several distinct features in the poetry of metaphysical poets. In the words of T.S. Eliot,

One sees in their poetry 'a direct sensuous apprehension of thought or a recreation of thought into feeling.

One of the main characteristic features of Metaphysical poetry is 'sensuous apprehension of thought.' Metaphysical poets use certain 'conceits' which prove a point. For example John Donne, the founder of the Metaphysical Poets, in his *A Valediction* compares the two lovers' souls to a pair of compasses. In his powerful poem *The Ecstasy*, he compares the eye-beams of the lovers to a twisted thread that connects the lovers' eyes. Another fine example of such imagery can be seen in Andrew Marvell's figuring of frustrated love as a set of parallel lines in *The Definition of Love*. Cazamian rightly observes,

Metaphysical poets are characterized by high intellectual conventions and startling affectations and hyperboles.

The following lines from Donne's *Ecstasy* illustrate the point,

But, O, alas! So long, so far  
Our bodies why do we forbear?  
They are ours, though not we.

Besides these, Eliot also talks about the unified sensibility, dissociation of sensibility, love, and wit. Even the language of these poets is simple and pure. The structure of the sentences on the other hand is far from simple. But it is a fidelity to thought and feeling. Heterogenous ideas are also yoked together in the poems of metaphysical poets. M.H. Abrams aptly says,

The metaphysical poets exploited all knowledge ... their comparisons were novel, witty and stirringly effective.

Thus, T.S. Eliot, with his review of metaphysical poets, drew the attention of the many readers and made the metaphysical poets great.

### **Theme of Love in Metaphysical Poetry**

The metaphysical poets were a small group of English lyric poets of the 17th century who had similar styles and concerns. Their fresh and sophisticated approach to the writing of lyrics was marked by an intellectual quality and an inventive and subtle style, with the use of the metaphysical conceit (a figure of speech that employs unusual and paradoxical images). John Donne, Andrew Marvell, Crashaw, Cleveland, Cowley, and Vaughan are some of the metaphysical poets. Their poetry has a unique place in English literature. It is, perhaps, completely different from the poetry of all periods. It is remarkably famous for the dramatic opening in which the poet addresses his beloved and God unconventionally.

The love poetry of the metaphysical poets reflect ideas from Renaissance Neo-Platonism. They show a marked relationship between the soul and body and the union of lovers' souls. Most metaphysical poets use a psychological realism to describe the tensions of love. Donne, regarded as one of the chief poetic innovators among the metaphysical poets, was reacting against the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Elizabethan) love lyrics, which embodied courtly-love conventions which idealized women. His view is often a somewhat egotistical view, with the stress on male ownership of women, defining "maleness" against "femaleness" and suggesting the primacy of the man rather than an equal partnership in love. His poetry does not portray the unchanging view of love but express the poet's genuine and deep emotions and attitudes of different circumstances and experiences. He tries to define his experience of love through his own poetry. These experiences are personally felt by the reader as they are part of common human experiences.

Donne brings out love as an experience of the body, the soul or at times both. These experiences rise to emotions ranging from ecstasy to misery. The intense and personal experiences and moods of Donne have been the poet's central subjects in his poetry. He defined 'love' with the use of imagery and conceits. His "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" is a poem addressed to his wife. In the poem the poet allays his lady-love's fears and misgivings arising from his going away to a distant land and says that this separation is no separation at all and that their relationship is as abiding and constant as ever. There is a love of souls so complete as to make one soul that is better than either and is exempt from change. This idea of the unity of souls is the basic proposition in the poem.

### **Influence of Renaissance and Reformation on Milton**

Milton's work reflects the influence of both the reformation and the Renaissance. The Renaissance and the Reformation had their impact on England in the sixteenth century. Generally speaking, they exerted pulls in mutually opposite directions. Most of the Elizabethans came under the classical and humanistic influence of the Renaissance but did not admit the influence of the Reformation on their literary work. Spenser among them, however, tried obviously to reconcile the 'two enthusiasms.' But Milton, "the poetical son of Spenser," as Dryden called him, to homogenise these two into a perfect whole. When he started writing, the initial exuberance ushered in by the Renaissance and the Reformation was already on its way out. His poetry is the first and the last example of the happy and effortless harmonisation of the two mutually antagonistic enthusiasms which stirred the England of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

#### **Milton Blends the Two:**

Very roughly speaking, the spirit of the Reformation provides the content and spirit of Milton poetry, and the spirit of the Renaissance classicism its moulded pattern. Milton did in the seventeenth century what the poets of the French Pleiade had done in the sixteenth. "No poet," says Grierson in *The First Half-of the Seventeenth Century*, "realised so completely the Renaissance ideal of poetry cast in classical moulds-carried out so entirely and majestically the programme of the Pleiade. Milton, "and Milton only, succeeded in producing living and beautiful poems in correct classical forms. And into these classical forms he poured the intensest spirit of the Protestant movement." In fact Milton's puritanism (a product of the Reformation) and his Hellenism (a product of the Renaissance) were more closely harmonised in his genius than the formulary division of theme and form would suggest. Just as Addison professed "to enliven morality with wit and to temper wit with morality". Milton seems to have enlivened puritanism with Hellenism and tempered his Hellenism with puritanism. Milton was neither a godless pagan nor a Puritan formalist nor was he both simultaneously. He imbibed the true spirit of both tendencies and wrote under the unified impact of both. Let us see how.

Milton's important poems *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* show in themselves a preponderance of the Renaissance spirit over his puritanism. Basically, these two companion poems are poems of joy. *L'Allegro* describing the pleasures sought after by a joyous man, and the other the pursuits desired by a melancholy man. The first poem is the work of a young man who is filled to the brim with *the joie de vivre* and who abandons himself to those pleasures which were anathema to the gloomy Puritans. Thus the poem strikes a positively anti-Puritan note.

In *Il Penseroso* the tone and spirit are much more subdued, and they put Milton nearer the Puritans. The Goddess of Melancholy is described as a "pensive nun" and has a few definitely Christian associations. But there is the same Renaissance element visible too.

*Paradise Lost*, Milton's *magnum opus* is, according to L.A. Cormican, "the highest achievement of the Protestant mind looking at the whole created cosmos through faith purified and elevated till it coincides with the mind of God." Both in theme and purpose *Paradise Lost* is a product of the Reformation spirit. Its theme is the fall of Satan and, through him the fall of Man. Its purpose is, in Milton's own words, "to justify the ways of God to man."



### Classical Allusions in Milton's Poetry

A classical allusion is a reference to a classical story, religion, work of art, song, or poem. Most of the Elizabethan writers came under the classical influence. John Milton was one such significant poet who used many classical allusions in his poems. In fact, he was the only poet succeeded in producing living and beautiful poems in correct classical forms. And into these classical forms Milton poured the intensest spirit of the Protestant movement.

Milton was affected by the classical literature and its characteristics such as the love and appreciation of the literature of ancient Greece and Rome, a keen love of beauty and art, and a new stress on human life and spirits. The following are some of the classical allusions in his poems.

Milton's "Lycidas" is a pastoral elegy. It is practically required to pay homage to classical mythology. He does so by tipping his hat just about every mythological figure ever. Strictly speaking every line has a god or a goddess in it. Many allusions which are there in the poem are partly Milton's attempt to signal to his readers that he is a Poet-with-a-capital P. And they are partly an effort to cling to something stable, like a long literary and mythological tradition, after the devastating loss of his friend. In the very first line of the poem, he refers to 'Laurels' which easily recalls the story of Apollo, the God of Prophecy, and Daphne. The laurel is a symbol of both poetry and everlasting youth. The "sacred sisters," are the nine muses of Mount Helicon who were long believed to inspire poetry. 'The death of the mythological poet, Orpheus' is recounted in order to show that even nymphs and muses can't protect those they love from dying. 'Phoebus' tells the speaker to cool his jets about the whole fame thing. When he touches the speaker's ears, that's an **allusion** to Virgil's *Eclogues*, whose speaker is similarly reprimanded by the god. The speaker tells Alpheus, a river and god in classical mythology, to return. In one story, Alpheus fell in love with a nymph (Arethuse) bathing in his river. He pursued her but she was transformed by Diana (goddess of the hunt and virginity; also called Artemis) into a stream that mingled with Alpheus, went underground, and reemerged in Sicily. The poet wants to return to the pastoral themes discussed earlier in the poem because Alpheus is associated with pastoral poetry.

Milton's *Samson Agonistes* is a classical tragedy composed strictly on the principles enunciated by Aristotle in his *Poetics* and, to a great extent, after the practice of the Greek tragedy writers – Euripides, Sophocles, and Aeschylus. However, the spirit and the theme are highly religious. Milton put something of himself in the Biblical hero who defied the corrupt rulers of his times and fell a martyr to virtue and integrity. The mould of the tragedy is Hellenic but the spirit is preeminently Hebraic.

### **Features of Neo-Classical Poetry**

In the history of English Literature, the last quarter of the 17<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century is generally regarded as the Neo-Classical Period. It is also called the Augustan Age. John Dryden, Alexander Pope, and Jonathan Swift are the most significant writers of this period. They hated both restoration profligacy and puritanism. So their primary aim was to teach and their style was didactic. Their favourite form of writing was satire. They tried to reform by ridiculing the foolishness and wickedness. Their attitude was rationalistic and utilitarian. Their works are examples of perfect craftsmanship. Their works are very artificial and less spontaneous. They spring not from heart but from head. In short they are known for correctness and elegance. The following are some other characteristic features of the neoclassical poetry.

Neoclassical poetry reflects the ideas of the neoclassical period in history, which occurred in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Some of the major themes during this period included the importance of reason, morality, and order. In both content and form, these themes were emphasized in neoclassical poetry.

Another belief during the neoclassical period was that human nature is unchanging. This is one of the reasons that the works of the classical Greek and Roman writers became popular once again as well as how the time period got its name. Rather than focusing on individual expression, the content of much neoclassical poetry was an imitation or revision of classical works. In other words, writing about new ideas was not encouraged but finding new ways to express classical ideas was.

Another common feature of neoclassical poetry is the importance of subject matter. It was also important for neoclassical authors to focus on generalities as opposed to specifics. This type of poetry was written with the intention that it would be public, not a private expression of ideas or emotion. The purpose of literature, and poetry specifically, during this time was to provide moral instruction to readers.

The form of neoclassical poetry is also important. The types of poems that one could write were somewhat limited to the same types written during the classical period, and it was important that the poets adhered strictly to the meter and rhyme of the specific type of verse. Some pieces written during this time included tragedies, comedies, odes, and pastorals, to name a few. The dominant type of writing during this time period, however, was satire.

Satire is a type of writing in which something is ridiculed. This can be done in a number of ways. One example of satire would be the mock epic, which is when a long epic poem is written about a subject that is not really worthy of an epic. Satire is often a form of social commentary. Despite the strict adherence to the rules in most forms of neoclassical poetry, satire offered a relatively large amount of freedom for the writers. While restraint and order were emphasized, wit was also an important element during this time. There are several well-known writers of neoclassical poetry.

### **Mock-Epic or Mock-Heroic Poem**

An epic may loosely be defined as a narrative in verse in which heroic actions are related in an elevated style. But the mock-epic or mock-heroic poem is a distinguished type of parody which imitates both the elaborate form and the ceremonious style of the epic genre, but applies it to narrate at length a commonplace or trivial, worthless subject in an exalted manner and style. In a mock-epic there is a contrast between the trivial theme and lofty treatment. In the words of Margaret Drabble,

Mock-epic is a satirical form that produces ridicule and humour by the presentation of low characters or trivial subjects in the lofty style of classical epic or heroic poems.

The mock-epic is an old one, going back to pseudo Homeric *Batrachomyomachi* (Battle of the Frogs and the Mice) and nearer to Pope's time, to Alessandro Tassone's *Rape of the Bucket* and Boileau's *Le Lutrin*. Pope took what he needed from the suggestions of earlier writers but his use of the epic tradition as he knew it in Homer, Virgil, and Milton, varying in kind from direct parody to indirect suggestion, is essentially his own. Thus, it burlesques the Classical epic by bringing the formulas characteristic of the epic – the invocation of a deity, a formal statement of theme, the division of the work into books and cantos, grandiose speeches, battles, supernatural machinery, and so on – to bear upon a trivial subject. Here are a few differences that one finds between epic and mock-epic.

<u>Epic</u>	<u>Mock Epic</u>
Iliad, Aeneid	The Rape of the Lock
The Arming of the Hero	Toilet (dressing) scene
Battle	Card game
Meddling Gods and Goddesses	Sylphs and Gnomes
The Journey to the Underworld	The Cave of Spleen
The Stratagem	The Pinch of Snuff
Banquette	Small party

Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* is a brilliant example of mock-heroic style. It uses highly polished verses, satirical heroic couplets, and intelligence to satirize the fuss that results when an idle young lord cuts a small lock of hair from the head of an idle young beauty. In other words, it celebrates a quarrel between the belles and elegants of his day over the theft of a lady's curl. In the words of Hazlitt, "In *The Rape of the Lock*, the little is made great and the great little."

In *The Rape of the Lock* often considered one of the highest achievements of the mock epic poetry, the heroic action of epic is maintained, but the scale is sharply reduced. The hero's preparation for combat is transposed to a fashionable boat ride up the Thames, and the ensuing battle is a card game. The hero steals the titular lock of hair while the heroine is pouring coffee.

### Augustan Satire and its Attributes

Satire is a literary composition in prose or verse whose principal aim is to ridicule folly or vice. It keeps the reader in good humour. It is intended to ridicule, not to abuse. But it must be forceful and effective. It may be direct or indirect but always aims at censure. Dryden said that the true end of satire is the amendment of vices by correction.

During the Augustan Age many writers used this literary composition to ridicule the follies of human beings and the society. Alexander Pope is one of the most significant Augustan poet who wrote poetry often in satirical vein. In satire, Pope achieved two of the greatest poetic satires of all time in the Augustan period. *The Rape of the Lock* (1712 and 1714) was a gentle mock-heroic. He applies Virgil's heroic and epic structure to the story of a young woman (Arabella Fermor) having a lock of hair snipped by an amorous baron (Lord Petre). The *structure* of the comparison forced Pope to invent mythological forces to overlook the struggle. So he created an epic battle, complete with a mythology of sylphs and metempsychosis, over a game of Ombre, leading to a fiendish appropriation of the lock of hair. Finally, a *deus ex machina* appears and the lock of hair experiences an apotheosis. The poem was an enormous public success.

A decade after the gentle, laughing satire of *The Rape of the Lock*, Pope wrote his masterpiece of invective and specific opprobrium in *The Dunciad*. The story is that of the goddess Dulness choosing a new Avatar. She settles upon one of Pope's personal enemies, Lewis Theobald, and the poem describes the coronation and heroic games undertaken by all of the dunces of Great Britain in celebration of Theobald's ascension.

John Gay was another poet and dramatist who used satire in his writings. He was one of the outstanding writers of the Augustan period. He wrote on political society, on social dangers, and on follies that must be addressed to protect the greater whole. His *The Beggar's Opera* (1728) was a social satire. It was based on an idea given to Gay by his friend Jonathan Swift. In fact, he and Pope belong on one side of a line separating the celebrants of the individual and the celebrants of the social.

Besides Pope and John Gay, a single name that overshadows all other writers in the 18<sup>th</sup> century prose satire is Jonathan Swift. His satires range over all topics. His satire marked the development of prose parody away from simple satire or burlesque. His first major satire was *A Tale of a Tub* (1703–1705), which introduced an ancients/moderns division that would serve as a distinction between the old and new conception of value. The "moderns" sought trade, empirical science, the individual's reason above the society's, while the "ancients" believed in inherent and immanent value of birth, and the society over the individual's determinations of the good. In Swift's satire, the moderns come out looking insane and proud of their insanity, and dismissive of the value of history. In Swift's most significant satire, *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), autobiography, allegory, and philosophy mix together in the travels. Thematically, *Gulliver's Travels* is a critique of human vanity, of pride. Book one, the journey to Liliput, begins with the world as it is. Book two shows that

the idealized nation of Brobdingnag with a philosopher king is no home for a contemporary Englishman. Book four depicts the land of the Houyhnhnms, a society of horses ruled by pure reason, where humanity itself is portrayed as a group of “yahoos” covered in filth and dominated by base desires. It shows that, indeed, the very desire for reason may be undesirable, and humans must struggle to be neither Yahoos nor Houyhnhnms, for book three shows what happens when reason is unleashed without any consideration of morality or utility (i.e. madness, ruin, and starvation).

There were other satirists who worked in a less virulent way, who took a bemused pose and only made lighthearted fun. Tom Brown, Ned Ward, and Tom D’Urfey were all satirists in prose and poetry whose works appeared in the early part of the Augustan age. Tom Brown’s most famous work in this vein was *Amusements Serious and Comical, Calculated for the Meridian of London* (1700). Ned Ward’s most memorable work was *The London Spy* (1704–1706). *The London Spy*, before *The Spectator*, took up the position of an observer and uncomprehendingly reporting back. Tom D’Urfey’s *Wit and Mirth: or Pills to Purge Melancholy* (1719) was another satire that attempted to offer entertainment, rather than a specific bit of political action, in the form of coarse and catchy songs.

Thus, Satire was present in all genres during the Augustan period. Therefore, it was an ideal method of attack for ironists and conservatives—those who would not be able to enunciate a set of values to change toward but could condemn present changes as ill-considered. So omnipresent and powerful was satire in the Augustan age that more than one literary history has referred to it as the “Age of satire” in literature.



### Precursors of Romantic Poetry

The precursors of Romanticism in English poetry go back to the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with figures such as James Thomson (1700-48), Oliver Goldsmith (1728-74), Thomas Percy (1728-1811), Thomas Chatterton (1752-70), James Macpherson (1736-96), Thomas Gray (1716-71), William Collins (1721-59), George Crabbe (1754-1832), Robert Burns (1759-95), and William Blake (1757-1827).

These poets believed in what Victor Hugo describes as 'liberalism in literature.' Not much worried about rules and conventions, they believed in individual poetic inspiration. They showed a new appreciation of the world of Nature which the neoclassical poetry and mostly neglected. They placed more importance on the individual than on society. In their poetry one saw a stronger democratic spirit, a greater concern for the oppressed and the poor, and a greater emphasis on individualism in poetry. Their poetry becomes much more subjective. They make experiments with new measures and stanzaic forms. While exhibiting all the above tendencies in their poetic works, their work proves that though the early eighteenth century was an age of reason, the channels of Romanticism were never dry.

Though there are many poets, Thomas Gray, Robert Burns and William Blake come before us as the major precursors of the Romantic period. Gray was one of the most learned men of the Europe of his day. He was also a genuine poet but his poetic production is lamentably small – just a few odes, some miscellaneous poems, and the *Elegy*. He started his career as a strait-jacketed classicist and ended as a genuine romantic. His work, according to Hudson, is "a kind of epitome of the changes which were coming over the literature of his time." *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* is Gray's finest poem which earned him the praise of even Johnson who condemned most of Gray's poetry. Hudson observes about this poem: "There is, first, the use of nature, which though employed only as a background, is still handled with fidelity and sympathy. There is, next, the churchyard scene, the twilight atmosphere, and the brooding melancholy of the poem, which at once connect it...with one side of the Romantic Movement – the development of the distinctive romantic mood. The contrast drawn between the country and the town the peasant's simple life is remarkable.

Robert Burns was a Scottish peasant who took to poetry and became the truly national poet of Scotland. His work *Poems Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* (1786) sky-rocketed him to fame. All these poems are imbued with the spirit of romantic lyricism in its untutored spontaneity, humour, pathos and sympathy with nature and her lowly creatures including the sons of the soil. A critic observes: "Burns was a real peasant who drove the plough as he hummed his songs, and who knew all the wretchedness and joys and sorrows of the countryman's life. Sincerity and passion are the chief keys of his verse.

William Blake was an out and out rebel against all the social, political, and literary conventions of the eighteenth century. It is with considerable inaccuracy that he can be included among the the precursors of the Romantic Revival, as in many ways he is even more romantic than the romantic poets! The most undisciplined and the most lonely of all poets, he lived in his own world peopled by phantoms and spectres whom he treated as more real than the humdrum realities of the physical world. He is best known for his three thin volumes – *Poetical Sketches* (1783), *Songs of Innocence* (1789), and *Songs of Experience* (1794), which contain some of the most orient gems of English lyricism.

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**Unit (B) – Poems Prescribed**


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**Amoretti LXXV: ONE DAY I WROTE HER NAME**

Edmund Spenser (c. 1552-1599)

One day I wrote her name upon the strand,  
 But came the waves and washed it away:  
 Again I wrote it with a second hand,  
 But came the tide, and made my pains his prey.  
 "Vain man," said she, "that dost in vain assay,  
 A mortal thing so to immortalize;  
 For I myself shall like to this decay,  
 And eke my name be wiped out likewise."  
 "Not so," (quod I) "let baser things devise  
 To die in dust, but you shall live by fame:  
 My verse your vertues rare shall eternize,  
 And in the heavens write your glorious name:  
     Where whenas death shall all the world subdue,  
     Our love shall live, and later life renew."

**About the Author**

**Edmund Spenser**, English poet, who bridged the medieval and Elizabethan periods, and who is most famous for his long allegorical romance, *The Faerie Queene*.

**Life and Works**

Spenser was born in London, where he attended the Merchant Taylors' School. He then went on to Pembroke College, University of Cambridge, where he took a degree in 1576. In 1579 he entered the service of the English courtier Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, and met the English poet Sir Philip Sidney, to whom he dedicated his first major poem, *The Shepheardes Calender* (1579). This work demonstrates the great poetic flexibility of the English language. It is a series of 12 pastoral poems, or eclogues, written in a variety of metres (see Versification) and employing a vocabulary of obsolete words and coined expressions to give a suggestion of antiquity:

A Shepeheards boye (no better doe him call)  
 When Winters wastful spight was almost spent,  
 All in a sunneshine day, as did befall,  
 Led forth his flock, that had bene long ypent.  
 So faynt they woxe, and feeble in the folde,  
 That now unnethes their feete could them uphold.

All as the Sheepe, such was the shepeheards looke,  
 For pale and wanne he was, (alas the while,)  
 May seeme he lovd, or else some care he tooke:  
 Well couth he tune his pipe, and frame his stile.  
 Tho to a hill his faynting flocke he ledde,  
 And thus him playnd, the while his shepe there fedde.

("First Eclogue", 1—12)



Words such as "woxe" (grew), "unnethes" (scarcely), and "playnd" (lamented) were already archaic by the time that Spenser was writing. However, through the use of these archaisms, and in the figure of the singing shepherd Colin Clout, the pastoral conventions of Virgil and other Classical authors are given an assumed English ancestry. The concern with national history and destiny demonstrated here is further evidenced in the "Fourth Eclogue", which is "purposely intended to the honour and praise of our most gracious sovereign, Queen Elizabeth", as Spenser writes in the brief note that prefaces it.

### **A Brief Summary of "One Day I Wrote Her Name"**

The poem begins with the appearance of a lover who tries to immortalise his beloved by writing her name in the sand. But every time he tries, sea washes and his work goes in vain. He tries this for the first time, second and so on until his lover, seeing that he is trying to make possible something that is impossible, tells him that he is not going to make it. She also explains that she has tried the same thing but the result was like his now. But believing at his possibility in making her and their love immortal he tells her that he will write everything in his verses so that even when they will be dead and their generation too, others will be going on reading those verses and know about the great love that they have for each other.

### **Essay Questions:**

#### **1. Write a critical appreciation of Edmund Spenser's "One Day I Wrote Her Name."**

Edmund Spenser's "One Day I Wrote Her Name" is a sonnet which is extracting from the poem *Amoretti* by Edmund Spenser in the Renaissance era. The sonnets were in fashion during the Elizabethan times because they reflected the rigour and order that Renaissance writers valued. It is a Spenserian Sonnet with an octave, sestet, and two couplets. It consists of 14 lines with a rhyme scheme of *abab bcbc cdcd ee*. It has three quatrains and a couplet in iambic pentameter. It is a poem based on the contradiction between mortality and immortality, permanence and temporariness.

It is a poem of true love. What this poem is basically trying to portray is that when you love someone or something that love does not have to end. Love is eternal and in this case it will last into what the author believes to be heaven. The central purpose of this poem is to make one realize that our lives are not forever, our relationships are not forever, but love is forever and eternal. Love is the only thing that can break the rules of mortality. Love is forever and will last into our next lives if our path leads us to heaven, that is where our love will follow us.

It starts out with a man writing a woman's name in the sand. But it washes away. He tries again with his other hand, even the second time it washes away. The author says "But came the tide, and made my pains his prey." The first eight lines of this poem illustrates a man who is trying to make what is perishable, last forever. This man tried to write her lover's name upon the strand twice but in vein. But he is trying to do the same thing twice and hopes to expect different results. This illustrates insanity on the man's part. After that, a woman says "Vain man." She calls this man vain because he writes in the sand expecting for the name to stay there, and it obviously won't because the tide will wash it away. She goes on to say

... that dost in vain assay  
A mortal thing so to immortalize.  
For I myself shall, like to this, decay,

And eek my name be wiped out likewise.”

Basically what this woman is trying to say is that this man is a fool in the aspect of life and relationships. Just like the sand is washed away from the tide, this woman he cares for will die eventually and there is nothing that he can do to control that because immortality is not real.

The poem goes on to say “Not so,” quote I,  
“let baser things decide  
To die in dust, but you shall live by fame:  
My verse your virtues rare shall eternize,  
And in the heavens write you glorious name,”

These lines in the poem show that the man claims he can make their love last forever despite mortality. He says he can do this by using his verse. He goes on to say that though people die, (because people do die because they are mortal) everyone will still have knowledge of their love because it will be eternal.

The last two lines of the poem are the rhyming couplets, these are the most important lines of the poem because they have so much meaning and they conclude the poem.

“Where when as death shall all the world subdue  
Our love shall live, and later life renew.”

What the speaker is trying to portray is that they may live mortal lives but their love will last forever. They will be together until death and even after death they will reunite into the kingdom of heaven, where they will live forever.

L'ALLEGRO

John Milton (1608-1674)

Hence loathed Melancholy  
 Of *Cerberus*, and blackest midnight born,  
 In *Stygian* Cave forlorn  
 'Mongst horrid shapes, and shreiks, and sights unholy,  
 Find out som uncouth cell, [ 5 ]  
 Wher brooding darknes spreads his jealous wings,  
 And the night-Raven sings;  
 There under *Ebon* shades, and low-brow'd Rocks,  
 As ragged as thy Locks,  
 In dark *Cimmerian* desert ever dwell. [ 10 ]  
 But com thou Goddes fair and free,  
 In Heav'n ycleap'd *Euphrosyne*,  
 And by men, heart-easing Mirth,  
 Whom lovely *Venus* at a birth  
 With two sister Graces more [ 15 ]  
 To Ivy-crowned *Bacchus* bore;  
 Or whether (as som Sager sing)  
 The frolick Wind that breathes the Spring,  
*Zephir* with *Aurora* playing,  
 As he met her once a Maying, [ 20 ]  
 There on Beds of Violets blew,  
 And fresh-blown Roses washt in dew,  
 Fill'd her with thee a daughter fair,  
 So bucksom, blith, and debonair.  
 Haste thee nymph, and bring with thee [ 25 ]  
 Jest and youthful Jollity,  
 Quips and Cranks, and wanton Wiles,  
 Nods, and Becks, and Wreathed Smiles,  
 Such as hang on *Hebe's* cheek,  
 And love to live in dimple sleek; [ 30 ]  
 Sport that wrincled Care derides,  
 And Laughter holding both his sides.  
 Com, and trip it as ye go  
 On the light fantastick toe,  
 And in thy right hand lead with thee, [ 35 ]  
 The Mountain Nymph, sweet Liberty;  
 And if I give thee honour due,  
 Mirth, admit me of thy crue  
 To live with her, and live with thee,  
 In unreproved pleasures free; [ 40 ]  
 To hear the Lark begin his flight,  
 And singing startle the dull night,  
 From his watch-towre in the skies,  
 Till the dappled dawn doth rise;  
 Then to com in spight of sorrow, [ 45 ]

And at my window bid good morrow,  
 Through the Sweet-Briar, or the Vine,  
 Or the twisted Eglantine.  
 While the Cock with lively din,  
 Scatters the rear of darknes thin, [ 50 ]  
 And to the stack, or the Barn dore,  
 Stoutly struts his Dames before,  
 Oft list'ning how the Hounds and horn,  
 Chearly rouse the slumbring morn,  
 From the side of som Hoar Hill, [ 55 ]  
 Through the high wood echoing shrill.  
 Som time walking not unseen  
 By Hedge-row Elms, on Hillocks green,  
 Right against the Eastern gate,  
 Wher the great Sun begins his state, [ 60 ]  
 Rob'd in flames, and Amber light,  
 The clouds in thousand Liveries dight.  
 While the Plowman neer at hand,  
 Whistles ore the Furrow'd Land,  
 And the Milkmaid singeth blithe, [ 65 ]  
 And the Mower whets his sithe,  
 And every Shepherd tells his tale  
 Under the Hawthorn in the dale.\*  
 Streit mine eye hath caught new pleasures  
 Whilst the Lantskip round it measures, [ 70 ]  
 Russet Lawns, and Fallows Gray,  
 Where the nibling flocks do stray,  
 Mountains on whose barren brest  
 The labouring clouds do often rest:  
 Meadows trim with Daisies pide, [ 75 ]  
 Shallow Brooks, and Rivers wide.  
 Towers, and Battlements it sees  
 Boosom'd high in tufted Trees,  
 Wher perhaps som beauty lies,  
 The Cynosure of neighbouring eyes. [ 80 ]  
 Hard by, a Cottage chimney smokes,  
 From betwixt two aged Okes,  
 Where *Corydon* and *Thyrsis* met,  
 Are at their savory dinner set  
 Of Hearbs, and other Country Messes, [ 85 ]  
 Which the neat-handed *Phillis* dresses;  
 And then in haste her Bowre she leaves,  
 With *Thestylis* to bind the Sheaves;  
 Or if the earlier season lead  
 To the tann'd Haycock in the Mead, [ 90 ]  
 Som times with secure delight  
 The up-land Hamlets will invite,  
 When the merry Bells ring round,

And the jocond rebecks sound  
 To many a youth, and many a maid, [ 95 ]  
 Dancing in the Chequer'd shade;  
 And young and old com forth to play  
 On a Sunshine Holyday,  
 Till the live-long day-light fail,  
 Then to the Spicy Nut-brown Ale, [ 100 ]  
 With stories told of many a feat,  
 How *Faery Mab* the junkets eat,  
 She was pincht, and pull'd she sed,  
 And he by Friars Lanthorn led  
 Tells how the drudging *Goblin* swet [ 105 ]  
 To ern his Cream-bowle duly set,  
 When in one night, ere glimps of morn,  
 His shadowy Flale hath thresh'd the Corn  
 That ten day-labourers could not end,  
 Then lies him down the Lubbar Fend. [ 110 ]  
 And stretch'd out all the Chimney's length,  
 Basks at the fire his hairy strength;  
 And Crop-full out of dores he flings,  
 Ere the first Cock his Mattin rings.  
 Thus don the Tales, to bed they creep, [ 115 ]  
 By whispering Windes soon lull'd asleep.  
 Towred Cities please us then,  
 And the busie humm of men,  
 Where throngs of Knights and Barons bold,  
 In weeds of Peace high triumphs hold, [ 120 ]  
 With store of Ladies, whose bright eies  
 Rain influence, and judge the prise  
 Of Wit, or Arms, while both contend  
 To win her Grace, whom all commend.  
 There let *Hymen* oft appear [ 125 ]  
 In Saffron robe, with Taper clear,  
 And pomp, and feast, and revelry,  
 With mask, and antique Pageantry,  
 Such sights as youthfull Poets dream  
 On Summer eeves by haunted stream. [ 130 ]  
 Then to the well-trod stage anon,  
 If *Jonsons* learned Sock be on,  
 Or sweetest *Shakespear* fancies childe,  
 Warble his native Wood-notes wilde,  
 And ever against eating Cares, [ 135 ]  
 Lap me in soft *Lydian* Aires,  
 Married to immortal verse,  
 Such as the meeting soul may pierce  
 In notes, with many a winding bout  
 Of lincked sweetnes long drawn out, [ 140 ]  
 With wanton heed, and giddy cunning,

The melting voice through mazes running;  
Untwisting all the chains that ty  
The hidden soul of harmony.  
That *Orpheus* self may heave his head [ 145 ]  
From golden slumber on a bed  
Of heapt *Elysian* flowres, and hear  
Such streins as would have won the ear  
Of *Pluto*, to have quite set free  
His half regain'd *Eurydice*. [ 150 ]  
These delights, if thou canst give,  
Mirth with thee, I mean to live.

### About the Author

**John Milton**, English poet, whose rich, dense verse was a powerful influence on succeeding English poets, and whose prose was devoted to the defence of civil and religious liberty. Milton is often considered the greatest English poet after Shakespeare.

### Life

Milton was born in London on December 9, 1608, and educated at St Paul's School and Christ's College, Cambridge University. He intended to become a clergyman in the Church of England, but his growing dissatisfaction with the state of the Anglican clergy, together with his own developing poetic interests, led him to abandon this path. From 1635 to 1637 he lived in his father's country home in Horton, Buckinghamshire, preparing himself for his poetic career by entering upon an ambitious programme of reading the Latin and Greek classics and ecclesiastical and political history. From 1637 to 1639 he toured France and Italy, where he met the leading literary figures of the day. On his return to England, he settled in London and began tutoring schoolboys and writing a series of social, religious, and political tracts.

In 1642 he married the 17-year-old Mary Powell, who left him after a few weeks because of the incompatibility of their temperaments, but was reconciled with him in 1645; she died in 1652. In his writings, Milton supported the parliamentary cause in the Civil War between Parliamentarians and Royalists, and in 1649 he was appointed Latin secretary to the Council of State by the government of the Commonwealth. He became totally blind in about 1652 and thereafter carried on his literary work helped by an assistant; with the aid also of the poet Andrew Marvell, he fulfilled his government duties until the restoration of Charles II in 1660. In 1656 he married his second wife, Katherine Woodcock, who died two years later, shortly after giving birth to a daughter who lived only a few months. With the Restoration, Milton was punished for his support of Parliament by a fine and a short term of imprisonment. He married for a third time in 1663, to his former nurse Elizabeth Minshull, and until his death on November 8, 1674, he lived with her in seclusion.

Of the poet's personality, memoirs written by Milton's contemporaries indicate that his was a singular blend of grace and sweetness and of force and severity amounting almost to harshness. In some of his own writing he reveals his arrogance and bitterness. Although isolated and embittered by blindness, he fulfilled the tasks he had set himself, lightening his dark days with music and conversation.



## Works

John Milton's work is marked by cosmic themes and lofty religious idealism; it reveals an astonishing breadth of learning and command of the Greek, Latin, and Hebrew classics. His blank verse is of remarkable variety and richness, so skilfully modulated and flexible that it has been compared to organ tones.

Milton's career as a writer may be divided into three periods. The first, from 1625 to 1640, was the period of such early works as the poems written while he was still at Cambridge, the ode "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity" (1629), the sonnet "On Shakespeare" (1630), "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" (both probably 1631), "On Time" (c. 1632), "At a Solemn Musick" (1632-c. 1633), the masques *Arcades* (1632-c. 1634) and *Comus* (1634), and *Lycidas* (1637), a passionate pastoral elegy for Milton's fellow student at Christ's College, Edward King, who drowned in the Irish Sea. *Lycidas* dwells on the fear of premature death and unfulfilled ambition ("For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime/ Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer:/ Who would not sing for Lycidas? He knew/ Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme./ He must not float upon his watery bier/ Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,/ Without the meed of some melodious tear").

These works show a growing mastery of stanza and structure, and the use of archaisms, dense imagery, and proper names to be found in his later works. Stanza xxiv of "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity", for example, reads:

Nor is Osiris seen  
In Memphian grove, or green,  
Trampling the unshowered grass with lowings loud:  
Nor can he be at rest  
Within his sacred chest,  
Nought but profoundest hell can be his shroud,  
In vain with timbrelled anthems dark  
The sable-stoled sorcerers bear his worshipped ark.

His second period, from 1640 to 1660, was devoted chiefly to the writing of the prose tracts that established him as the most able pamphleteer of his time. In the first group of pamphlets, Milton attacked the institution of bishops and argued in favour of extending the spirit of the English Reformation. The first published of this group was *Of Reformation Touching Church Discipline in England* (1641); the one most deeply pondered and elaborately reasoned was *The Reason of Church Government Urged Against Prelaty* (1641-1642), in which he denounced the "impertinent yoke of prelacy, under whose inquisitorial and tyrannical duncery no free and splendid wit can flourish" and which also contains an important digression in which Milton tells of his own early life, education, and ambitions. (Such autobiographical digressions are found scattered throughout his prose works.)

The second phase of his devotion to social and political concerns yielded, among others, *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (1643), in which he argued that since marriage was instituted for intellectual as well as physical companionship, divorce should be granted for incompatibility; and his most famous prose work, *Areopagitica* (1644), an impassioned plea for freedom of the press, in which he demands "the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties". In *Of Education* (1644) Milton advocated an education combining classical instruction, to prepare the student for government service, with religious training. The third group of pamphlets includes those Milton wrote



to justify the execution of Charles I. The first of these, *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (1649), deals with constitutional questions and particularly with the rights of the people against tyrants: "No man", he wrote, "who knows aught, can be so stupid to deny that all men naturally were born free." In the final group of tracts, including *A Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes* (1659), Milton gave practical suggestions for government reform and argued against a professional clergy and in favour of allowing people to interpret Scripture according to their own conscience.

During his years as a prose writer and government servant, Milton composed part of his great epic poem *Paradise Lost* and 17 sonnets, among which are some of the most notable in the English language, including "On His Deceased Wife" (1658) and the famous "On His Blindness" (c. 1652-1655).

The apogee of Milton's poetic career was reached in his third period, from 1660 to 1674, during which he completed *Paradise Lost* (1667) and composed the companion epic *Paradise Regained* (1671) and the poetic drama *Samson Agonistes* (1671).

*Paradise Lost* is considered Milton's masterpiece and one of the greatest poems in world literature. In its 12 books he tells the story of the Fall of Adam in a context of cosmic drama and profound speculations. The poet's announced aim was to "justify the ways of God to men". The poem was written with soaring imagination and far-ranging intellectual grasp in his most forceful and exalted style. *Paradise Regained*, which tells of human salvation through Christ, is a shorter and lesser work, although still one of great richness and strength. In *Samson Agonistes*, a tragedy on the Greek model composed partly in blank verse and partly in unrhymed choric verse of varied line length, Milton employed the Old Testament story of Samson to inspire the defeated English Puritans with the courage to triumph through sacrifice.

### **A Brief Summary of "L'Allegro"**

*L'Allegro* is a pastoral poem by John Milton published in 1645. *L'Allegro* (which means "the happy man" in Italian) is invariably paired with the contrasting pastoral poem, *Il Penseroso* ("the melancholy man"), which depicts a similar day spent in contemplation and thought.

The poem is playful and is set within a pastoral scene that allows the main character to connect with folk stories and fairy tales in addition to various comedic plays and performances. There is a sort of progression from the pleasures found in *L'Allegro* with the pleasures found within *Il Penseroso*. It invokes Mirth and other allegorical figures of joy and merriment, and extols the active and cheerful life, while depicting a day in the countryside. Mirth, as one of the Graces, is connected with poetry within Renaissance literature, and the poem, in its form and content, is similar to dithyrambs to Bacchus or hymns to Venus. However, the pleasure that Mirth brings is moderated, and there is a delicate balance between the influence of Venus or Bacchus achieved by relying on their daughter.

### **Essay Question:**

#### **1. Give an account of the pursuits of the Cheerful Man in Milton's "L'Allegro."**

John Milton is one of the greatest poets in English literature. "L'Allegro" is one of the well-known and highly admired poems of Milton. According to Tillyard, "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" are the most finished products. These two poems represent all the characteristics typical of Milton's poetry. The poem "L'Allegro" describes a day in the life of a cheerful man.

The cheerful man drives out melancholy. He thinks that melancholy (sorrow) is born of fearful and dark thoughts. A sorrowful man sees horrible visions and screams. He is jealous and reckless and his hair is disordered. He loves to live in dark and lonely places. The cheerful man invites the goddess of mirth to come to him. Mirth must come with all her attendant jokes, jollity, puns, smart speeches, nods, becks, smiles that drive cares, the sidesplitting laughter and liberty. He prays for a free and happy life. He wants to go for a walk when the sun rises.

The cheerful man surveys his surroundings. He sees many pleasing objects where some lovely ladies live. He is admired by everyone in the neighbourhood. Sometimes he is attracted by the delights of a village above meadows and valleys. There the peasants dance to the accompaniment of fiddles. There are feasts and plays presided over by beautiful ladies. Then the cheerful man goes to the theatre when the comedies of Ben Jonson or William Shakespeare are being played. He wants to guard himself against the cares that destroy the life of man. He wants to listen to such music which Orpheus himself may be charmed or Pluto may surrender Eurydice unconditionally. If Mirth gives him such delights, he will be really a cheerful man.

L'Allegro is a cheerful man, but not a light-hearted man. He has literary sensitiveness. He is fond of music. He thinks of a sensuous world progressively transformed and spiritualized by fancy, convention, manners and art. Thus, the poem climbs a ladder of aesthetic experience, which begins with a bird's song and ends with the ecstasy of Lydian music. Milton concludes his poem saying:

"These delights if thou canst give Mirth, with thee I mean to live."

The poem proposes to discover the poet's plan to present a range of experience of many pleasures and its gradual transformation towards the knowledge and praise of God.

## 2. Describe briefly the events of an ideal day in the life of the Man of Mirth.

The poem L'Allegro describes the character of the Cheer Man and the nature of his pursuits. L'Allegro is both a student and a man of pleasure. He finds delight in reading books and also in the life of open air. But he does not do anything himself, except to study. He is merely a passive spectator of the activities of other people. Milton describes in this poem his pursuits from the early morning of a day to the midnight hour. However, the description is not confined to one season in the year. The activities of particular parts of the day vary from season to season. Milton makes due allowances for them. Besides, the pursuits of the Cheerful Man are not those of the city life but of the country. Thus we have in the poem an ideal day in the life of the Cheerful Man.

- i) **Early morning:** The day commences very early for the Cheerful Man. He is up with the lark as it springs from its watch towers in the skies, and soaring and singing to welcome the sky. The bird then flies down to him and perching on his latticed window sill, greets him good morning. L'Allegro listens to the lively din of the cock as it scatters the rear of darkness thin, to the barn door. If it is the early spring season, he listens to the cheerful sounds of the hunters. Their hounds and horns rouse the slumbering morn from the side of some hoar hill.
- ii) **Morning:** When the weather permits, L'Allegro stirs abroad and walks, not unseen, by the hedgerow elms "on hillocks green". He wants to greet the sun as he rises gloriously in the eastern sky. According to the seasons he watches the ploughman

listening over the furrowed land, the milkmaid singing merrily, the mower whetting his scythe, or the shepherd counting his flock under some thorn tree, in the valley below.

- iii) **Noon:** As the day advances he beholds the panorama of the swiftly changing landscape under the bright rays of the sun. There are “russet lawns and fallows with the nibbling flocks straying amidst them”.

There are mountains on whose barren breast the labouring clouds do often rest. Besides, there are meadows trim with daisies pied, shallow brooks and wide rivers, towers and battlements nearly half concealed by tall tufted trees. Perhaps these shelter some famous beauty, the cynosure of neighbouring eyes.

The feet of L’Allegro now lead him to the lovely cottage between two aged oaks, where the rude rustics, Corydon and Thyrsis, are set at dinner. Phyllis has dressed it, for them with great care. After the dinner, she goes to bind the sheaves of corn in the fields. If the earlier season prevails, she would go to the haystack in the meads.

- iv) **The Afternoon:** If it is some joyous season of festivity in the summer, the bells from the chapel of the upland hamlets invite him. He sees there the young and old of both sex gathering in the holiday dress. They are dancing to the accompaniment of music which is played till the livelong daylight fails.
- v) **The evening:** When the shades of evening fall, L’Allegro is invited indoors to share the spicy nut-brown ale, as it passes round. He listens to a number of remarkable adventures as he takes the liquor. One young maid says that she had been pinched and pulled by Fairy Mob who ate all the junkets. Another old rustic narrates how he had been misled by the fairy called Friar Rush or Will of the Wisp. Yet another villager describes how the fairy called Robin Good fellow performed a lot of drudgery in one night threshing the corn with his shadowy flail and doing the work of ten day labourers, in one night. In fact, the goblin ate the cream in the bowl set for him and then tired of the hard work, went to sleep near the chimney piece enjoying the warmth of the fire. At the first cock crow, he jumped out of the window and disappeared because he cannot see the light of day. Having thus narrated the tales, the villagers retire, to bed and L’Allegro leaves for his home.
- vi) **Night:** He now returns to his study and reads about the pleasures of city life as they are described in the ancient books of romance and chivalry. He visualises the scenes with the help of his imagination. He sees the tournaments of the ancient days where the knights and barons bold with “store of ladies” have gathered in their weeds of peace.

There is in progress a contest either in wit or arms and the combatants vie with one another in distinguishing themselves before the lady who has been chosen to judge the winner and award the prize. Sometimes L’Allegro reads the masques of Ben Jonson or the comedies of Shakespeare. He seems to behold the god of marriage Hymen in the saffron coloured robes at the head of his troop. There is much pomp, feast and revelry.

- vii) **Midnight:** Finally L’Allegro is lulled to sleep by soft strains of music, the Lydian airs, when he retires to rest. It is such penetrating music that it enters the soul and untwists the soul of harmony from within.

**Conclusion:** Thus from early morning till late in the night L'Allegro is fully occupied. He is more a passive spectator of many activities rather than a share. He finds interest and pleasure in the common pursuits of everyday life of the ordinary people in the country side.

**2. What are the sights and scenes described in the poem?**

**(or)**

**How far do you think that the poem may be described as a gallery of pictures?**

L'Allegro is a poem which describes the character and pursuits of the cheerful man. In doing so, Milton sketches a series of activities which are mostly outdoor, and his home at Horton. Milton's primary interest is in the man. The scenes are of secondary importance to him. Therefore the sketches are pictures of what the cheerful man sees in the course of his rambles.

The pictures are of two kinds. They are sketched off in a line or two; or they are longer. Besides they are appropriated to particular parts of the day. Of the pictures which are confined to single lines and which belong of the early morning are the ploughman, the milkmaid, the mower and the shepherd. The ploughman whistles over the furrow, the milkmaid sings merrily, the mower whets his scythe, the shepherd tells his tale under the hawthorn shade.

There are longer pictures also and they include both humanity and nature. They also belong to different parts of the day. Thus the lark begins the flight in the early morning and startles the dull night by its singing from its watch tower in the skies, till the dappled dawn doth rise. Then the bird perches on the window-sill of L'Allegro and bids him good morning through the wood briar or the twisted eglantine. Similarly the cock at the head of his dames, "Scatters the rear of darkness thin" with his lively strutting before them. Or there are cheerful hunters with their hounds and their hunts and their horn awakening the slumbering morn from some "hoar hill" with their merry sounds and shouts. Or finally there is the picture of L'Allegro himself, green right against the eastern gate, to greet the sun rising in all the pomp of state with his innumerable train of clouds, brightly decked rays of its glory.

As the day advances the eye of L'Allegro sweeps over a swiftly changing scene. Here is a composite picture of "russet lawns- and fallows grey", mountains on whose barren breast the clouds often rest, meadows trim with daisies pied, shallow brooks and rivers wide. Perhaps the tufted trees of towers and battlements contain some lady of great beauty, "the cynosure of neighbouring eyes." This last touch gives a human interest to the poem which is very characteristic of Milton.

**THE SUNNE RISING (THE SUN RISING)**

John Donne (1572-1631)

Busy old fool, unruly Sun,  
Why dost thou thus,  
Through windows, and through curtains, call on us?  
Must to thy motions lovers' seasons run?  
Saucy pedantic wretch, go chide  
Late school-boys and sour prentices,  
Go tell court-huntsmen that the king will ride,  
Call country ants to harvest offices;  
Love, all alike, no season knows nor clime,  
Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags of time.

Thy beams so reverend, and strong  
Why shouldst thou think?  
I could eclipse and cloud them with a wink,  
But that I would not lose her sight so long.  
If her eyes have not blinded thine,  
Look, and to-morrow late tell me,  
Whether both th' Indias of spice and mine  
Be where thou left'st them, or lie here with me.  
Ask for those kings whom thou saw'st yesterday,  
And thou shalt hear, "All here in one bed lay."

She's all states, and all princes I;  
Nothing else is;  
Princes do but play us; compared to this,  
All honour's mimic, all wealth alchemy.  
Thou, Sun, art half as happy as we,  
In that the world's contracted thus;  
Thine age asks ease, and since thy duties be  
To warm the world, that's done in warming us.  
Shine here to us, and thou art everywhere;  
This bed thy center is, these walls thy sphere.

**About the Author**

**John Donne**, English poet, prose writer, and clergyman, considered the greatest of the Metaphysical poets and one of the greatest writers of love poetry.

Donne was born in London; he entered the University of Oxford at the age of 11, where he studied for three years. According to some accounts, he spent the next three years at the University of Cambridge but took no degree at either university. In 1592 he began the study of law at Lincoln's Inn, London. About two years later, it seems, he relinquished the Roman Catholic faith, in which he had been brought up, and joined the Anglican Church. His first book of poems, *Satires and Elegies*, was written during this period of residence in London. Although not published until 1633, the poems had circulated widely in manuscript. Some of Donne's most famous love poems, now known as part of the collection *Songs and Sonnets*, were also written at this time. A long-influential account of Donne's life distinguished



between the love poetry of the young “Jack” Donne in the 1590s and the older and more serious poetry of Donne the clergyman, but that tradition is now being questioned, not least because the love poetry seems to have been written over a period of perhaps 20 years.

For much of his early career Donne was only tenuously connected with the royal court and the patronage it could provide; it has been suggested, that for all their modish radicalism, the satires of this period were part of Donne’s attempt to gain patronage from influential courtiers. In 1596, he joined the naval expedition that Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, led against Cádiz, Spain. On his return to England, Donne was appointed private secretary to Sir Thomas Egerton, Keeper of the Great Seal. His secret marriage in 1601 to Egerton’s niece, Anne More, resulted in his dismissal from this position and a brief imprisonment. A cousin of his wife offered the couple refuge in Surrey. While there, Donne wrote his longest poem, *The Progresse of the Soule* (1601), which depicts ironically the transmigration of the soul of Eve’s apple.

During the next few years Donne made a meagre living as a lawyer, serving chiefly as counsel for Thomas Morton, an anti-Roman Catholic pamphleteer. Donne may have collaborated with Morton in writing pamphlets that appeared under Morton’s name from 1604 to 1607. Donne’s principal literary accomplishments during this period were *Divine Poems* (1607) and the prose work *Biathanatos* (posthumously published 1644), in which he argued that suicide is not intrinsically sinful. In 1608 a reconciliation was effected between Donne and his father-in-law, and his wife received a much-needed dowry. His next work, *Pseudo-Martyr* (1610), is a prose treatise maintaining that English Roman Catholics could, without breach of their religious loyalty, pledge an oath of allegiance to James I, King of England. This work improved his standing at court. Donne became a priest of the Anglican Church in 1615 and was appointed royal chaplain later that year. He attained eminence as a preacher, delivering sermons that are regarded as among the most brilliant and eloquent of his time. In 1617 his wife died, and it is said that this caused him to turn more fully to his vocation as an Anglican cleric.

Donne continued to write poetry, notably his striking collection of *Holy Sonnets* (1618), although most of it remained unpublished until the edition of 1633. In 1621 James I appointed him Dean of St Paul’s Cathedral, a post he held until his death. His friendship with the essayist and poet Izaak Walton, who later wrote a moving (if somewhat inaccurate) biography of Donne, began in 1624. While convalescing from a severe illness, Donne wrote *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* (1623-1624), a prose work that treats the themes of death and human relationships. It contains the famous lines: “No man is an Iland, intire of it selfe;...any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankinde; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee.” It is almost certain that Donne would have become a bishop in 1630 but for his poor health. During his final years he delivered a number of his most notable sermons, including the so-called funeral sermon, “Death’s Duel” (1631), delivered less than two months before his death.

The importance of Donne’s poetry was recognized in the 17th century, and it influenced many other writers of the period, particularly the so-called Metaphysical poets. In the 1590s—the period in which many of the sonnets of Shakespeare were also composed—Donne reacted against the smooth elegance of traditional love poetry with its Petrarchan and Neoplatonic conventions. In both love poems and elegies he ridicules and reverses conventional representations of women, offering black teeth, a yellow face, and red hair (“The Anagram”), or fingers “like a bunch of ragged carrots” and kisses like “a worm

sucking an envenomed sore" ("The Comparison"). The lyrics, often addressed to another individual, tend to focus on the speaker ("For God sake hold your tongue, and let me love" in "The Canonization", for example) and, unlike collections such as *Astrophel and Stella* (1591) by Sir Philip Sidney or *Epithalamion* (1595) by Edmund Spenser, appear to offer no narrative sequence. "The Flea" is characteristic in its striking but domestic opening situation ("Mark but this flea"), followed by a seductive and wittily sophisticated argument, conflating abstract symbolism with the concrete in order to convince the speaker's silent lover to give up her virginity. The temptation to read Donne's poetry as biographical remains very strong, given its vivid and dramatic language and situations, but recent criticism has focused on the multiplicity of voices in the lyric poetry and on a poetics of persuasion rather than self-expression. While many critics have found the confidence of the speaking voice compelling in these poems, others have noticed an anxiety of expression in their multiplicity, a sense of fragmentation and self-doubt.

The frequent use of paradox in both lyrics and prose (including the early prose, *Paradoxes and Problemes*) marks Donne's consistent interest in paradox itself as a means of approaching "truth". In "Satire 3", he writes of mysteries, "like the Sun, dazzling, yet plain to all eyes."

The paradox of each individual subjectively attempting to comprehend the objective and absolute is a subject which fascinates Donne, and it marks an important connection between his early works and the late religious writing. That fascination includes an understanding of the conflicting nature of human experiences and the uncertainties of a language at once literal and metaphoric. The "metaphysical conceit" (an extended or deliberately unlikely metaphor) provides Donne with a means of exploring such problems, in that it develops an idea by merging the concrete with the abstract and the subjective with the absolute. Thus in the famous image of the compasses which represent two lovers in "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning", Donne creates a timeless, ideal love, but can do so only in the image of the movement of the compasses and in the rhetoric of the poem.

Despite its change of subject, Donne's religious poetry bears marked similarities to his love lyrics. While "La Corona" has been accused of escaping into the impersonal safety of intellectual paradox, the best of the *Holy Sonnets* explore with dramatic and human urgency the paradoxes of Christian faith. "Sonnet 13" of the *Divine Meditations* begins, "Batter my heart, three-personed God; for, you / As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend", and ends, "for I / Except you enthrall me, never shall be free, / Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me." Petrarchan forms and images, the inconstancy of a lover, and the violence of love come together in these poems as Donne explores the individual sinner's relationship with God. Just as Donne used the language of religious worship to discuss love and passion, here he employs the language of love to discuss religious adoration.

While largely out of fashion in the 18th century, Donne's work grew in popularity during the following century; early in the 20th century it gained the prominence it now maintains, particularly through the influence of the Modernist poets T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound. The former's essay on the "Metaphysical Poets" (1921) remains one of the most valuable accounts of Donne's style.



### **Summary and Analysis of he Sun Rising”**

Lying in bed with his lover, the speaker chides the rising sun, calling it a “busy old fool,” and asking why it must bother them through windows and curtains. Love is not subject to season or to time, he says, and he admonishes the sun—the “Saucy pedantic wretch”—to go and bother late schoolboys and sour apprentices, to tell the court-huntsmen that the King will ride, and to call the country ants to their harvesting.

Why should the sun think that his beams are strong? The speaker says that he could eclipse them simply by closing his eyes, except that he does not want to lose sight of his beloved for even an instant. He asks the sun—if the sun’s eyes have not been blinded by his lover’s eyes—to tell him by late tomorrow whether the treasures of India are in the same place they occupied yesterday or if they are now in bed with the speaker. He says that if the sun asks about the kings he shined on yesterday, he will learn that they all lie in bed with the speaker.

The speaker explains this claim by saying that his beloved is like every country in the world, and he is like every king; nothing else is real. Princes simply play at having countries; compared to what he has, all honor is mimicry and all wealth is alchemy. The sun, the speaker says, is half as happy as he and his lover are, for the fact that the world is contracted into their bed makes the sun’s job much easier—in its old age, it desires ease, and now all it has to do is shine on their bed and it shines on the whole world. “This bed thy centre is,” the speaker tells the sun, “these walls, thy sphere.”

### **Form**

The three regular stanzas of “The Sun Rising” are each ten lines long and follow a line-stress pattern of 4255445555—lines one, five, and six are metered in iambic tetrameter, line two is in dimeter, and lines three, four, and seven through ten are in pentameter. The rhyme scheme in each stanza is ABBACDCDEE.

### **Commentary**

One of Donne’s most charming and successful metaphysical love poems, “The Sun Rising” is built around a few hyperbolic assertions—first, that the sun is conscious and has the watchful personality of an old busybody; second, that love, as the speaker puts it, “no season knows, nor clime, / Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags of time”; third, that the speaker’s love affair is so important to the universe that kings and princes simply copy it, that the world is literally contained within their bedroom. Of course, each of these assertions simply describes figuratively a state of feeling—to the wakeful lover, the rising sun does seem like an intruder, irrelevant to the operations of love; to the man in love, the bedroom can seem to enclose all the matters in the world. The inspiration of this poem is to pretend that each of these subjective states of feeling is an objective truth.

Accordingly, Donne endows his speaker with language implying that what goes on in his head is primary over the world outside it; for instance, in the second stanza, the speaker tells the sun that it is not so powerful, since the speaker can cause an eclipse simply by closing his eyes. This kind of heedless, joyful arrogance is perfectly tuned to the consciousness of a new lover, and the speaker appropriately claims to have all the world’s riches in his bed (India, he says, is not where the sun left it; it is in bed with him). The speaker captures the essence of his feeling in the final stanza, when, after taking pity on the sun and deciding to ease the burdens of his old age, he declares “Shine here to us, and thou art everywhere.”

**Essay Writing****1. Write a critical appreciation of John Donne's "The Sun Rising."**

John Donne is one of the greatest metaphysical poets of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. "The Sun Rising" is a love poem. The poet addresses the sun as an interfering old fool and one who doesn't care for any rules and regulations. He is angry with the sun because it has no good manners as it peeps through the windows and curtains of his bed room. The sun disturbs him in his love-making, as lovers are not bound by the changes that are caused by the sun's movements. The poet angrily addresses the sun as an affected old fool. He asks it to go away from their room. Instead of disturbing them, it should rebuke boys for being late to school. It must scold the apprentices for being unwilling to work hard.

The sun should instruct the courtiers to get ready to go out with the king for hunting. It should ask the busy farmers to collect their harvest. But the sun should leave them – the poet and his beloved, alone. It should not disturb them, for love knows no seasons, no climates and no hours. Days and months are mere sub-divisions of time. True love is external and is not affected by the passing of time.

Why does the sun suppose that its rays are so effective and so worthy of respect? If he so likes, he can obliterate its rays in a moment by closing his eyes. But he does not do so as he does not want to lose sight of the beautiful face of his beloved, even for so short a time. If the brightness of her eyes has not blinded it, the sun should again visit them the next day at a later hour. It must tell him whether both the East and the West Indies – the former known for its species and the latter for the gold mines – are still there where it has left them. It will not find them there, for they have contracted into that bed in which he is lying with his beloved. Similarly, if he searches for the kings he saw yesterday in different parts of the world. It will find that all of them have come together in his bed room.

The lover's little room is a world in itself. For the poet, his beloved is equal to all the states and kingdoms of the world. In possessing her, he considers himself to be as rich as all the Kings and Princes. They are all in all to each other and nothing else matters to them. Princes merely imitate them and try to be as happy as they are.

Compared to the glory of their love, all other glory is mere mockery, and all other wealth is false and deceptive. The sun is not as happy as he is because it is alone and does not have a beloved like his own. All the world has shrunk into their little bed. So, it is the sun's duty to give light and heat to that shrunken world, he will now get some rest, which he urgently needed in his old age. Its duty will be performed, if it only warms their little room, *the world of love*. If it gives light to them, it will be giving light to the whole world. Henceforth, the little world of the lovers would be the centre round which it will revolve. The four walls of their world mark the limits of its orbit.

**THE RAPE OF THE LOCK**

Alexander Pope (1688-1744)

**Canto 1**

What dire Offence from am'rous Causes springs,  
What mighty Contests rise from trivial Things,  
I sing—This Verse to CARYL, Muse! is due;  
This, ev'n Belinda may vouchsafe to view:  
Slight is the Subject, but not so the Praise,  
If She inspire, and He approve my Lays.  
Say what strange Motive, Goddess! cou'd compel  
A well-bred Lord t'assault a gentle Belle?  
Oh say what stranger Cause, yet unexplor'd,  
Cou'd make a gentle Belle reject a Lord?  
And dwells such Rage in softest Bosoms then?  
And lodge such daring Souls in Little Men?  
Sol thro' white Curtains shot a tim'rous Ray,  
And op'd those Eyes that must eclipse the Day;  
Now Lapdogs give themselves the rowzing Shake,  
And sleepless Lovers, just at Twelve, awake:  
Thrice rung the Bell, the Slipper knock'd the Ground,  
And the press'd Watch return'd a silver Sound.  
Belinda still her downy Pillow prest,  
Her Guardian Sylph prolong'd the balmy Rest.  
'Twas he had summon'd to her silent Bed  
The Morning-Dream that hover'd o'er her Head.  
A Youth more glitt'ring than a Birth-night Beau,  
(That ev'n in Slumber caus'd her Cheek to glow)  
Seem'd to her Ear his winning Lips to lay,  
And thus in Whispers said, or seem'd to say.  
Fairest of Mortals, thou distinguish'd Care  
Of thousand bright Inhabitants of Air!  
If e'er one Vision touch'd thy infant Thought,  
Of all the Nurse and all the Priest have taught,  
Of airy Elves by Moonlight Shadows seen,  
The silver Token, and the circled Green,  
Or Virgins visited by Angel-Pow'rs,  
With Golden Crowns and Wreaths of heav'nly Flowers,  
Hear and believe! thy own Importance know,  
Nor bound thy narrow Views to Things below.  
Some secret Truths from Learned Pride conceal'd,  
To Maids alone and Children are reveal'd:  
What tho' no Credit doubting Wits may give?  
The Fair and Innocent shall still believe.  
Know then, unnumbered Spirits round thee fly,  
The light Militia of the lower Sky;  
These, tho' unseen, are ever on the Wing,

Hang o'er the Box, and hover round the Ring.  
Think what an Equipage thou hast in Air,  
And view with scorn Two Pages and a Chair.  
As now your own, our Beings were of old,  
And once inclos'd in Woman's beauteous Mold;  
Thence, by a soft Transition, we repair  
From earthly Vehicles to these of Air.  
Think not, when Woman's transient Breath is fled,  
That all her Vanities at once are dead:  
Succeeding Vanities she still regards,  
And tho' she plays no more, o'erlooks the Cards.  
Her Joy in gilded Chariots, when alive,  
And Love of Ombre, after Death survive.  
For when the Fair in all their Pride expire,  
To their first Elements the Souls retire:  
The Sprights of fiery Termagants in Flame  
Mount up, and take a Salamander's Name.  
Soft yielding Minds to Water glide away,  
And sip with Nymphs, their Elemental Tea.  
The graver Prude sinks downward to a Gnome,  
In search of Mischief still on Earth to roam.  
The light Coquettes in Sylphs aloft repair,  
And sport and flutter in the Fields of Air.  
Know farther yet; Whoever fair and chaste  
Rejects Mankind, is by some Sylph embrac'd:  
For Spirits, freed from mortal Laws, with ease  
Assume what Sexes and what Shapes they please.  
What guards the Purity of melting Maids,  
In Courtly Balls, and Midnight Masquerades,  
Safe from the treach'rous Friend, and daring Spark,  
The Glance by Day, the Whisper in the Dark;  
When kind Occasion prompts their warm Desires,  
When Musick softens, and when Dancing fires?  
'Tis but their Sylph, the wise Celestials know,  
Tho' Honour is the Word with Men below.  
Some Nymphs there are, too conscious of their Face,  
For Life predestin'd to the Gnomes Embrace.  
These swell their Prospects and exalt their Pride,  
When Offers are disdain'd, and Love deny'd.  
Then gay Ideas crowd the vacant Brain;  
While Peers and Dukes, and all their sweeping Train,  
And Garters, Stars, and Coronets appear,  
And in soft Sounds, Your Grace salutes their Ear.  
'Tis these that early taint the Female Soul,  
Instruct the Eyes of young Coquettes to roll,  
Teach Infants Cheeks a bidden Blush to know,  
And little Hearts to flutter at a Beau.  
Oft when the World imagine Women stray,

The Sylphs thro' mystick Mazes guide their Way,  
Thro' all the giddy Circle they pursue,  
And old Impertinence expel by new.  
What tender Maid but must a Victim fall  
To one Man's Treat, but for another's Ball?  
When Florio speaks, what Virgin could withstand,  
If gentle Damon did not squeeze her Hand?  
With varying Vanities, from ev'ry Part,  
They shift the moving Toyshop of their Heart;  
Where Wigs with Wigs, with Sword-knots Sword-knots strive,  
Beaus banish Beaus, and Coaches Coaches drive.  
This erring Mortals Levity may call,  
Oh blind to Truth! the Sylphs contrive it all.  
Of these am I, who thy Protection claim,  
A watchful Sprite, and Ariel is my Name.  
Late, as I rang'd the Crystal Wilds of Air,  
In the clear Mirror of thy ruling Star  
I saw, alas! some dread Event impend,  
E're to the Main this Morning Sun descend.  
But Heav'n reveals not what, or how, or where:  
Warn'd by thy Sylph, oh Pious Maid beware!  
This to disclose is all thy Guardian can.  
Beware of all, but most beware of Man!  
He said; when Shock, who thought she slept too long,  
Leapt up, and wak'd his Mistress with his Tongue.  
'Twas then Belinda, if Report say true,  
Thy Eyes first open'd on a Billet-doux.  
Wounds, Charms, and Ardors, were no sooner read,  
But all the Vision vanish'd from thy Head.  
And now, unveil'd, the Toilet stands display'd,  
Each Silver Vase in mystic Order laid.  
First, rob'd in White, the Nymph intent adores  
With Head uncover'd, the cosmetic Pow'rs.  
A heav'nly Image in the Glass appears,  
To that she bends, to that her Eyes she rears;  
Th' inferior Priestess, at her Altar's side,  
Trembling, begins the sacred Rites of Pride.  
Unnumber'd Treasures ope at once, and here  
The various Off'rings of the World appear;  
From each she nicely culls with curious Toil,  
And decks the Goddess with the glitt'ring Spoil.  
This Casket India's glowing Gems unlocks,  
And all Arabia breathes from yonder Box.  
The Tortoise here and Elephant unite,  
Transform'd to Combs, the speckled and the white.  
Here Files of Pins extend their shining Rows,  
Puffs, Powders, Patches, Bibles, Billet-doux.  
Now awful Beauty puts on all its Arms;

The Fair each moment rises in her Charms,  
Repairs her Smiles, awakens ev'ry Grace,  
And calls forth all the Wonders of her Face;  
Sees by Degrees a purer Blush arise,  
And keener Lightnings quicken in her Eyes.  
The busy Sylphs surround their darling Care;  
These set the Head, and those divide the Hair,  
Some fold the Sleeve, while others plait the Gown;  
And Betty's prais'd for Labours not her own.

### Canto 2

Not with more Glories, in th' Ethereal Plain,  
The Sun first rises o'er the purpled Main,  
Than issuing forth, the Rival of his Beams  
Launch'd on the Bosom of the Silver *Thames*.  
Fair Nymphs, and well-drest Youths around her shone,  
But ev'ry Eye was fix'd on her alone.  
On her white Breast a sparkling *Cross* she wore,  
Which *Jews* might kiss, and Infidels adore.  
Her lively Looks a sprightly Mind disclose,  
Quick as her Eyes, and as unfix'd as those:  
Favours to none, to all she Smiles extends,  
Oft she rejects, but never once offends.  
Bright as the Sun, her Eyes the Gazers strike,  
And, like the Sun, they shine on all alike.  
Yet graceful Ease, and Sweetness void of Pride,  
Might hide her Faults, if *Belles* had Faults to hide:  
If to her share some Female Errors fall,  
Look on her Face, and you'll forget 'em all.

This Nymph, to the Destruction of Mankind,  
Nourish'd two Locks which graceful hung behind  
In equal Curls, and well conspir'd to deck  
With shining Ringlets the smooth Iv'ry Neck.  
Love in these Labyrinths his Slaves detains,  
And mighty Hearts are held in slender Chains.  
With hairy sprindges we the Birds betray,  
Slight lines of Hair surprise the Finny Prey,  
Fair Tresses Man's Imperial Race insnare,  
And Beauty draws us with a single Hair.

Th' Advent'rous *Baron* the bright Locks admir'd,  
He saw, he wish'd, and to the Prize aspir'd:  
Resolv'd to win, he meditates the way,  
By Force to ravish, or by Fraud betray;  
For when Success a Lover's Toil attends,  
Few ask, if Fraud or Force attain'd his Ends.



For this, ere *Phoebus* rose, he had implor'd  
Propitious Heav'n, and ev'ry Power ador'd,  
But chiefly *Love-to Love* an Altar built,  
Of twelve vast *French* Romances, neatly gilt.  
There lay three Garters, half a Pair of Gloves,  
And all the Trophies of his former Loves.  
With tender *Billet-doux* he lights the Pyre,  
And breathes three am'rous Sighs to raise the Fire.  
Then Prostrate falls, and begs with ardent Eyes  
Soon to obtain, and long possess the Prize:  
The Pow'rs gave Ear, and granted half his Pray'r,  
The rest, the Winds dispers'd in empty Air.

But now secure the painted Vessel glides,  
The Sun-beams trembling on the floating Tydes,  
While Musick steals upon the Sky,  
And soften'd Sounds along the Waters die.  
Smooth flow the Waves, the Zephyrs gently play,  
*Belinda* smil'd, and all the World was gay.  
All but the *Sylph*-With careful Thoughts opprest,  
Th' impending Woe sat heavy on his Breast.  
He summons straight his Denizens of Air;  
The lucid Squadrons round the Sails repair:  
Soft o'er the Shrouds Aerial Whispers breath,  
That seem'd but Zephyrs to the Train beneath.  
Some to the Sun their Insect-Wings unfold,  
Waft on the Breeze, or sink in Clouds of Gold.  
Transparent Forms, too fine for mortal Sight,  
Their fluid Bodies half dissolv'd in Light.  
Loose to the Wind their airy Garments flew,  
Thin glitt'ring Textures of the filmy Dew;  
Dipt in the richest Tincture of the Skies,  
Where Light disports in ever-mingling Dies,  
While ev'ry Beam new transient Colours flings,  
Colours that change whene'er they wave their Wings.  
Amid the Circle, on the gilded mast,  
Superiour by the Head, was *Ariel* plac'd:  
His Purple Pinions op'ning to the Sun,  
He rais'd his Azure Wand, and thus begun.

Ye *Slyphs* and *Sylphids*, to your Chief give ear,  
*Fays, Fairies, Genii, Elves, and Daemons* hear!  
Ye know the Spheres and various Tasks assign'd  
By Laws Eternal to th' Aerial Kind.  
Some in the Fields of purest *Aether* play,  
And bask and whiten in the Blaze of Day.  
Some guide the Course of wand'ring Orbs on high,  
Or roll the Planets through the boundless Sky.

Some less refin'd, beneath the Moon's pale Light  
 Pursue the Stars that shoot athwart the Night;  
 Or suck the Mists in grosser Air below,  
 Or dip their Pinions in the painted Bow,  
 Or brew fierce Tempests on the wintry Main,  
 Or o'er the Glebe distil the kindly Rain.  
 Others on Earth o'er human Race preside,  
 Watch all their Ways, and all their Actions guide:  
 Of these the Chief the Care of Nations own,  
 And guard with Arms Divine the *British Throne*.

Our humbler Province is to tend the Fair,  
 Not a less pleasing, tho' less glorious Care.  
 To save the Powder from too rude a Gale,  
 Nor let th' imprison'd Essences exhale;  
 To draw fresh Colours from the vernal Flow'rs,  
 To steal from Rainbows ere they drop in Show'rs  
 A brighter Wash; to curl their waving Hairs,  
 Assist their Blushes, and inspire their Airs;  
 Nay oft, in Dreams, Invention we bestow,  
 To change a *Flounce*, or add a *Furbelo*!

This Day, black Omens threat the brightest Fair  
 That e'er deserv'd a watchful Spirit's Care;  
 Some dire Disaster, or by Force, of Slight,  
 But what, or where, the Fates have wrapt in Night.  
 Whether the Nymph shall break *Diana's* law,  
 Or some frail *China* jar receive a Flaw,  
 Or stain her Honour, or her new Brocade,  
 Forget her Pray'rs, or miss a Masquerade,  
 Or lose her Heart, or Necklace, at a Ball;  
 Or whether Heav'n has doom'd that *Shock* must fall.  
 Haste then ye Spirits! to your Charge repair;  
 The flutt'ring Fan be *Zephyretta's* Care;  
 The Drops to thee, *Brillante*, we consign;  
 And, *Momentilla*, let the watch be thine;  
 Do thou, *Crispissa*, tend her fav'rite Lock;  
*Ariel* himself shall be the guard of *Shock*

To Fifty chosen *Sylphs*, of special Note,  
 We trust th' important Charge, the *Petticoat*:  
 Oft have we known that sev'nfold Fence to fail,  
 Tho' stiff with Hoops, and arm'd with Ribs of Whale.  
 Form a strong Line about the Silver Bound,  
 And guard the wide Circumference around.

Whatever Spirit, careless of his Charge,  
 His Post neglects, or leaves the Fair at large,



Shall feel sharp Vengeance soon o’ertake his Sins,  
 Be stop’d in *Vials*, or transfixt with *Pins*;  
 Or plung’d in Lakes of bitter *Washes* lie,  
 Or wedg’d whole Ages in a *Bodkin’s* Eye:  
*Gums* and *Pomatus* shall his Flight restrain,  
 While clog’d he beats his silken Wings in vain;  
 Or *Alom-Stypticks* with contracting Pow’r  
 Shrink his thin Essence like a rivell’d Flower.  
 Or, as *Ixion* fix’d, the Wretch shall feel  
 The giddy Motion of the whirling Mill,  
 Midst Fumes of burning Chocolate shall glow,  
 And tremble at the Sea that froaths below!

He spoke; the Spirits from the Sails descend;  
 Some, Orb in Orb, around the Nymph extend,  
 Some thrid the mazy Ringlets of her Hair,  
 Some hang upon the Pendants of her Ear;  
 With beating Hearts the dire Event they wait,  
 Anxious, and trembling for the Birth of Fate.

### About the Author

**Alexander Pope**, English poet, who, modelling himself after the great poets of classical antiquity, wrote highly polished verse, often in a didactic or satirical vein. In verse translations, moral and critical essays, and satires that made him the foremost poet of his age, he brought the heroic couplet, which had been refined by John Dryden, to ultimate perfection.

Pope was the son of a London cloth merchant. His parents were Roman Catholics, which meant that, as a result of the severe anti-Catholic laws of William III, he was barred from studying at university. Thus, although he was educated by priests until he was 12 years old, Pope was primarily self-taught, reading widely in English letters, as well as in French, Italian, Latin, and Greek. He wrote his first verses at the age of 12. A devastating illness, probably tuberculosis of the spine, struck him in childhood, leaving him deformed. He never grew taller than 4ft 6in and he was subject to violent headaches and fevers. Perhaps as a result of this condition, he was hypersensitive and exceptionally irritable, referring famously in his poem “An Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot” (1735) to “this long disease, my life”. He was a bitterly quarrelsome man and attacked his literary contemporaries viciously and often without provocation, although to some he was warm and affectionate; he had long and close friendships, for example, with Jonathan Swift and John Gay.



Pope’s literary career began in 1704, when the playwright William Wycherley, pleased by Pope’s verse, introduced him into the circle of fashionable London wits and writers, who welcomed him as a prodigy. He first attracted public attention in 1709 with his *Pastorals*, and two years later published his *Essay on Criticism*, a brilliant exposition of the canons of taste. His most famous poem, *The Rape of the Lock* (first published 1712; revised edition published 1714) is a fanciful and ingenious mock-heroic based on the true story of a

quarrel between two Catholic families, the Fermors and the Petres, which had resulted from Lord Petre's having cut off a lock of the hair of Arabella Fermor. Pope deployed all his satiric talents in describing this ridiculous spectacle, both opining and delighting "What dire offence from am'rous causes springs, / What mighty contests rise from trivial things".

He continued to experiment in subject matter and theme, in 1713 publishing *Windsor Forest*, a celebration of the Peace of Utrecht, and in 1714 producing "The Wife of Bath", which, like his "The Temple of Fame" (1715), was imitative of the works of the same title by the 14th-century English poet Geoffrey Chaucer. In 1717 a collection of Pope's works containing the most noteworthy of his lyrics was published. His translation of Homer's *Iliad* was published in six volumes from 1715 to 1720 and a translation of the *Odyssey* followed (1725-1726). He also published a (much reviled) edition of Shakespeare's plays (1725).

From 1713 Pope was a member of the so-called Scriblerus Club—a group of friends who met to discuss literature and to concoct parodies of pedantic scholarship—and with his friend Swift he wrote scornful and very successful critical reviews of those whom they considered inferior writers; in 1727 they began a series of parodies of the same writers. These hapless adversaries hurled insults at Swift and Pope in return, and in 1728 Pope lampooned them in one of his best-known works, *The Dunciad*, a satire celebrating dullness, which ridiculed poets and writers who "painful vigils keep, / Sleepless themselves, to give their readers sleep". He later enlarged the work to four volumes, the final one appearing in 1743. In 1734 he completed his *Essay on Man*. Pope's last works, *Imitations of Horace* (1733-1739), were attacks on political enemies of his friends. He died in 1744.

Pope used the heroic couplet with exceptional brilliance and great flexibility, exploiting its natural capacity for antithetical and epigrammatic statement and using it as a base to craft many poignant and witty formulations, such as "For fools rush in where angels fear to tread", "To err is human; to forgive, divine" (from *An Essay on Criticism*) and "Hope springs eternal in the human breast" (from *An Essay on Man*). He also skilfully used poetic devices such as puns, allusions, chiasmus, and zeugma, as in this famous passage from *The Rape of the Lock*:

Whether the Nymph shall break *Diana's* Law,  
Or some frail *China* jar receive a Flaw,  
Or stain her Honour, or her new Brocade,  
Forget her Pray'rs, or miss a Masquerade,  
Or lose her Heart, or Necklace, at a Ball.

The humour lies in the placing together, as if they are of the same importance, of things which are clearly different; it satirizes people who have so lost their sense of value that losing one's heart is no worse than losing a necklace, for instance. Such work combines the wit of poetry with the vigour of prose, and Pope's great success with the heroic couplet helped to make it the dominant poetic form of the 18th century.

### **Summary of the Poem**

Belinda arises to prepare for the day's social activities after sleeping late. Her guardian sylph, Ariel, warned her in a dream that some disaster will befall her, and promises to protect her to the best of his abilities. Belinda takes little notice of this oracle, however. After an elaborate ritual of dressing and primping, she travels on the Thames River to Hampton Court Palace, an ancient royal residence outside of London, where a group of wealthy young socialites are gathering for a party. Among them is the Baron, who has

already made up his mind to steal a lock of Belinda's hair. He has risen early to perform an elaborate set of prayers and sacrifices to promote success in this enterprise. When the partygoers arrive at the palace, they enjoy a tense game of cards, which Pope describes in mock-heroic terms as a battle. This is followed by a round of coffee. Then the Baron takes up a pair of scissors and manages, on the third try, to cut off the coveted lock of Belinda's hair. Belinda is furious. Umbriel, a mischievous gnome, journeys down to the Cave of Spleen to procure a sack of sighs and a flask of tears which he then bestows on the heroine to fan the flames of her ire. Clarissa, who had aided the Baron in his crime, now urges Belinda to give up her anger in favor of good humor and good sense, moral qualities which will outlast her vanities. But Clarissa's moralizing falls on deaf ears, and Belinda initiates a scuffle between the ladies and the gentlemen, in which she attempts to recover the severed curl. The lock is lost in the confusion of this mock battle, however; the poet consoles the bereft Belinda with the suggestion that it has been taken up into the heavens and immortalized as a constellation.

### **Characters**

**Belinda** - Belinda is based on the historical Arabella Fermor, a member of Pope's circle of prominent Roman Catholics. Robert, Lord Petre (the Baron in the poem) had precipitated a rift between their two families by snipping off a lock of her hair.

**The Baron** - This is the pseudonym for the historical Robert, Lord Petre, the young gentleman in Pope's social circle who offended Arabella Fermor and her family by cutting off a lock of her hair. In the poem's version of events, Arabella is known as Belinda.

**Caryl** - The historical basis for the Caryl character is John Caryll, a friend of Pope and of the two families that had become estranged over the incident the poem relates. It was Caryll who suggested that Pope encourage a reconciliation by writing a humorous poem.

**Goddess** - The muse who, according to classical convention, inspires poets to write their verses

**Shock** - Belinda's lapdog

**Ariel** - Belinda's guardian sylph, who oversees an army of invisible protective deities

**Umbriel** - The chief gnome, who travels to the Cave of Spleen and returns with bundles of sighs and tears to aggravate Belinda's vexation

**Brillante** - The sylph who is assigned to guard Belinda's earrings

**Momentilla** - The sylph who is assigned to guard Belinda's watch

**Crispissa** - The sylph who is assigned to guard Belinda's "fav'rite Lock"

**Clarissa** - A woman in attendance at the Hampton Court party. She lends the Baron the pair of scissors with which he cuts Belinda's hair, and later delivers a moralizing lecture.

**Thalestris** - Belinda's friend, named for the Queen of the Amazons and representing the historical Gertrude Morley, a friend of Pope's and the wife of Sir George Browne (rendered as her "beau," Sir Plume, in the poem). She eggs Belinda on in her anger and demands that the lock be returned.

**Sir Plume** - Thalestris's "beau," who makes an ineffectual challenge to the Baron. He represents the historical Sir George Browne, a member of Pope's social circle.

## **Summary of Canto I and Canto II**

### **Canto I Summary**

*The Rape of the Lock* begins with a passage outlining the subject of the poem and invoking the aid of the muse. Then the sun ("Sol") appears to initiate the leisurely morning routines of a wealthy household. Lapdogs shake themselves awake, bells begin to ring, and although it is already noon, Belinda still sleeps. She has been dreaming, and we learn that the dream has been sent by "her guardian Sylph," Ariel. The dream is of a handsome youth who tells her that she is protected by "unnumber'd Spirits"--an army of supernatural beings who once lived on earth as human women. The youth explains that they are the invisible guardians of women's chastity, although the credit is usually mistakenly given to "Honour" rather than to their divine stewardship. Of these Spirits, one particular group--the Sylphs, who dwell in the air--serve as Belinda's personal guardians; they are devoted, lover-like, to any woman that "rejects mankind," and they understand and reward the vanities of an elegant and frivolous lady like Belinda. Ariel, the chief of all Belinda's puckish protectors, warns her in this dream that "some dread event" is going to befall her that day, though he can tell her nothing more specific than that she should "beware of Man!" Then Belinda awakes, to the licking tongue of her lapdog, Shock. Upon the delivery of a billet-doux, or love-letter, she forgets all about the dream. She then proceeds to her dressing table and goes through an elaborate ritual of dressing, in which her own image in the mirror is described as a "heavenly image," a "goddess." The Sylphs, unseen, assist their charge as she prepares herself for the day's activities.

### **Commentary**

The opening of the poem establishes its mock-heroic style. Pope introduces the conventional epic subjects of love and war and includes an invocation to the muse and a dedication to the man (the historical John Caryl) who commissioned the poem. Yet the tone already indicates that the high seriousness of these traditional topics has suffered a diminishment. The second line confirms in explicit terms what the first line already suggests: the "am'rous causes" the poem describes are not comparable to the grand love of Greek heroes but rather represent a trivialized version of that emotion. The "contests" Pope alludes to will prove to be "mighty" only in an ironic sense. They are card-games and flirtatious tussles, not the great battles of epic tradition. Belinda is not, like Helen of Troy, "the face that launched a thousand ships" (see the SparkNote on The Iliad), but rather a face that--although also beautiful-- prompts a lot of foppish nonsense. The first two verse-paragraphs emphasize the comic inappropriateness of the epic style (and corresponding mind-set) to the subject at hand. Pope achieves this discrepancy at the level of the line and half-line; the reader is meant to dwell on the incompatibility between the two sides of his parallel formulations. Thus, in this world, it is "little men" who in "tasks so bold... engage"; and "soft bosoms" are the dwelling-place for "mighty rage." In this startling juxtaposition of the petty and the grand, the former is real while the latter is ironic. In mock-epic, the high heroic style works not to dignify the subject but rather to expose and ridicule it. Therefore, the basic irony of the style supports the substance of the poem's satire, which attacks the misguided values of a society that takes small matters for serious ones while failing to attend to issues of genuine importance.

With Belinda's dream, Pope introduces the "machinery" of the poem--the supernatural powers that influence the action from behind the scenes. Here, the sprites that watch over Belinda are meant to mimic the gods of the Greek and Roman traditions, who are



sometimes benevolent and sometimes malicious, but always intimately involved in earthly events. The scheme also makes use of other ancient hierarchies and systems of order. Ariel explains that women's spirits, when they die, return "to their first Elements." Each female personality type (these types correspond to the four humours) is converted into a particular kind of sprite. These gnomes, sylphs, salamanders, and nymphs, in turn, are associated with the four elements of earth, air, fire, and water. The airy sylphs are those who in their lifetimes were "light Coquettes"; they have a particular concern for Belinda because she is of this type, and this will be the aspect of feminine nature with which the poem is most concerned.

Indeed, Pope already begins to sketch this character of the "coquette" in this initial canto. He draws the portrait indirectly, through characteristics of the Sylphs rather than of Belinda herself. Their priorities reveal that the central concerns of womanhood, at least for women of Belinda's class, are social ones. Woman's "joy in gilded Chariots" indicates an obsession with pomp and superficial splendor, while "love of Ombre," a fashionable card game, suggests frivolity. The erotic charge of this social world in turn prompts another central concern: the protection of chastity. These are women who value above all the prospect marrying to advantage, and they have learned at an early age how to promote themselves and manipulate their suitors without compromising themselves. The Sylphs become an allegory for the mannered conventions that govern female social behavior. Principles like honor and chastity have become no more than another part of conventional interaction. Pope makes it clear that these women are not conducting themselves on the basis of abstract moral principles, but are governed by an elaborate social mechanism--of which the Sylphs cut a fitting caricature. And while Pope's technique of employing supernatural machinery allows him to critique this situation, it also helps to keep the satire light and to exonerate individual women from too severe a judgment. If Belinda has all the typical female foibles, Pope wants us to recognize that it is partly because she has been educated and trained to act in this way. The society as a whole is as much to blame as she is. Nor are men exempt from this judgment. The competition among the young lords for the attention of beautiful ladies is depicted as a battle of vanity, as "wigs with wigs, with sword-knots sword-knots strive." Pope's phrases here expose an absurd attention to exhibitions of pride and ostentation. He emphasizes the inanity of discriminating so closely between things and people that are essentially the same in all important (and even most unimportant) respects.

Pope's portrayal of Belinda at her dressing table introduces mock-heroic motifs that will run through the poem. The scene of her toilette is rendered first as a religious sacrament, in which Belinda herself is the priestess and her image in the looking glass is the Goddess she serves. This parody of the religious rites before a battle gives way, then, to another kind of mock-epic scene, that of the ritualized arming of the hero. Combs, pins, and cosmetics take the place of weapons as "awful Beauty puts on all its arms."

## Canto 2 Summary

Belinda, rivaling the sun in her radiance, sets out by boat on the river Thames for Hampton Court Palace. She is accompanied by a party of glitzy ladies ("Nymphs") and gentlemen, but is far and away the most striking member of the group. Pope's description of her charms includes "the sparkling Cross she wore" on her "white breast," her "quick" eyes and "lively looks," and the easy grace with which she bestows her smiles and attentions evenly among all the adoring guests. Her crowning glories, though, are the two ringlets that dangle on her

“iv’ry neck.” These curls are described as love’s labyrinths, specifically designed to ensnare any poor heart who might get entangled in them.

One of the young gentlemen on the boat, the Baron, particularly admires Belinda’s locks, and has determined to steal them for himself. We read that he rose early that morning to build an altar to love and pray for success in this project. He sacrificed several tokens of his former affections, including garters, gloves, and billet-doux (love-letters). He then prostrated himself before a pyre built with “all the trophies of his former loves,” fanning its flames with his “am’rous sighs.” The gods listened to his prayer but decided to grant only half of it.

As the pleasure-boat continues on its way, everyone is carefree except Ariel, who remembers that some bad event has been foretold for the day. He summons an army of sylphs, who assemble around him in their iridescent beauty. He reminds them with great ceremony that one of their duties, after regulating celestial bodies and the weather and guarding the British monarch, is “to tend the Fair”: to keep watch over ladies’ powders, perfumes, curls, and clothing, and to “assist their blushes, and inspire their airs.” Therefore, since “some dire disaster” threatens Belinda, Ariel assigns her an extensive troop of bodyguards. Brillante is to guard her earrings, Momentilla her watch, and Crispissa her locks. Ariel himself will protect Shock, the lapdog. A band of fifty Sylphs will guard the all-important petticoat. Ariel pronounces that any sylph who neglects his assigned duty will be severely punished. They disperse to their posts and wait for fate to unfold.

### Commentary

From the first, Pope describes Belinda’s beauty as something divine, an assessment which she herself corroborates in the first canto when she creates, at least metaphorically, an altar to her own image. This praise is certainly in some sense ironical, reflecting negatively on a system of public values in which external characteristics rank higher than moral or intellectual ones. But Pope also shows a real reverence for his heroine’s physical and social charms, claiming in lines 17-18 that these are compelling enough to cause one to forget her “female errors.” Certainly he has some interest in flattering Arabella Fermor, the real-life woman on whom Belinda is based; in order for his poem to achieve the desired reconciliation, it must not offend (see “Context”). Pope also exhibits his appreciation for the ways in which physical beauty is an art form: he recognizes, with a mixture of censure and awe, the fact that Belinda’s legendary locks of hair, which appear so natural and spontaneous, are actually a carefully contrived effect. In this, the mysteries of the lady’s dressing table are akin, perhaps, to Pope’s own literary art, which he describes elsewhere as “nature to advantage dress’d.”

If the secret mechanisms and techniques of female beauty get at least a passing nod of appreciation from the author, he nevertheless suggests that the general human readiness to worship beauty amounts to a kind of sacrilege. The cross that Belinda wears around her neck serves a more ornamental than symbolic or religious function. Because of this, he says, it can be adored by “Jews” and “Infidels” as readily as by Christians. And there is some ambiguity about whether any of the admirers are really valuing the cross itself, or the “white breast” on which it lies--or the felicitous effect of the whole. The Baron, of course, is the most significant of those who worship at the altar of Belinda’s beauty. The ritual sacrifices he performs in the pre-dawn hours are another mock-heroic element of the poem, mimicking the epic tradition of sacrificing to the gods before an important battle or journey, and drapes his project with an absurdly grand import that actually only exposes its

triviality. The fact that he discards all his other love tokens in these preparations reveals his capriciousness as a lover. Earnest prayer, in this parodic scene, is replaced by the self-indulgent sighs of the lover. By having the gods grant only half of what the Baron asks, Pope alludes to the epic convention by which the favor of the gods is only a mixed blessing: in epic poems, to win the sponsorship of one god is to incur the wrath of another; divine gifts, such as immortality, can seem a blessing but become a curse. Yet in this poem, the ramifications of a prayer “half” granted are negligible rather than tragic; it merely means that he will manage to steal just one lock rather than both of them.

In the first canto, the religious imagery surrounding Belinda’s grooming rituals gave way to a militaristic conceit. Here, the same pattern holds. Her curls are compared to a trap perfectly calibrated to ensnare the enemy. Yet the character of female coyness is such that it seeks simultaneously to attract and repel, so that the counterpart to the enticing ringlets is the formidable petticoat. This undergarment is described as a defensive armament comparable to the Shield of Achilles (see Scroll XVIII of *The Iliad*), and supported in its function of protecting the maiden’s chastity by the invisible might of fifty Sylphs. The Sylphs, who are Belinda’s protectors, are essentially charged to protect her not from failure but from too great a success in attracting men. This paradoxical situation dramatizes the contradictory values and motives implied in the era’s sexual conventions.

In this canto, the sexual allegory of the poem begins to come into fuller view. The title of the poem already associates the cutting of Belinda’s hair with a more explicit sexual conquest, and here Pope cultivates that suggestion. He multiplies his sexually metaphorical language for the incident, adding words like “ravish” and “betray” to the “rape” of the title. He also slips in some commentary on the implications of his society’s sexual mores, as when he remarks that “when success a Lover’s toil attends, / few ask, if fraud or force attain’d his ends.” When Ariel speculates about the possible forms the “dire disaster” might take, he includes a breach of chastity (“Diana’s law”), the breaking of china (another allusion to the loss of virginity), and the staining of honor or a gown (the two incommensurate events could happen equally easily and accidentally). He also mentions some pettier social “disasters” against which the Sylphs are equally prepared to fight, like missing a ball (here, as grave as missing prayers) or losing the lapdog. In the Sylphs’ defensive efforts, Belinda’s petticoat is the battlefield that requires the most extensive fortifications. This fact furthers the idea that the rape of the lock stands in for a literal rape, or at least represents a threat to her chastity more serious than just the mere theft of a curl.

### Themes and Form

*The Rape of the Lock* is a humorous indictment of the vanities and idleness of 18th-century high society. Basing his poem on a real incident among families of his acquaintance, Pope intended his verses to cool hot tempers and to encourage his friends to laugh at their own folly.

The poem is perhaps the most outstanding example in the English language of the genre of mock-epic. The epic had long been considered one of the most serious of literary forms; it had been applied, in the classical period, to the lofty subject matter of love and war, and, more recently, by Milton, to the intricacies of the Christian faith. The strategy of Pope’s mock-epic is not to mock the form itself, but to mock his society in its very failure to rise to epic standards, exposing its pettiness by casting it against the grandeur of the traditional epic subjects and the bravery and fortitude of epic heroes: Pope’s mock-heroic treatment in *The Rape of the Lock* underscores the ridiculousness of a society in which values have lost



all proportion, and the trivial is handled with the gravity and solemnity that ought to be accorded to truly important issues. The society on display in this poem is one that fails to distinguish between things that matter and things that do not. The poem mocks the men it portrays by showing them as unworthy of a form that suited a more heroic culture. Thus the mock-epic resembles the epic in that its central concerns are serious and often moral, but the fact that the approach must now be satirical rather than earnest is symptomatic of how far the culture has fallen.

Pope's use of the mock-epic genre is intricate and exhaustive. *The Rape of the Lock* is a poem in which every element of the contemporary scene conjures up some image from epic tradition or the classical world view, and the pieces are wrought together with a cleverness and expertise that makes the poem surprising and delightful. Pope's transformations are numerous, striking, and loaded with moral implications. The great battles of epic become bouts of gambling and flirtatious tiffs. The great, if capricious, Greek and Roman gods are converted into a relatively undifferentiated army of basically ineffectual sprites. Cosmetics, clothing, and jewelry substitute for armor and weapons, and the rituals of religious sacrifice are transplanted to the dressing room and the altar of love.

The verse form of *The Rape of the Lock* is the heroic couplet; Pope still reigns as the uncontested master of the form. The heroic couplet consists of rhymed pairs of iambic pentameter lines (lines of ten syllables each, alternating stressed and unstressed syllables). Pope's couplets do not fall into strict iambs, however, flowering instead with a rich rhythmic variation that keeps the highly regular meter from becoming heavy or tedious. Pope distributes his sentences, with their resolutely parallel grammar, across the lines and half-lines of the poem in a way that enhances the judicious quality of his ideas. Moreover, the inherent balance of the couplet form is strikingly well suited to a subject matter that draws on comparisons and contrasts: the form invites configurations in which two ideas or circumstances are balanced, measured, or compared against one another. It is thus perfect for the evaluative, moralizing premise of the poem, particularly in the hands of this brilliant poet.

### **Essay Questions:**

#### **1. Consider Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* as a mock-heroic poem in the light of cantos I and II.**

Etymologically 'epic' has been derived from the Greek root 'epicus' which means 'the story of a warrior or the divine figure.' In convention, epic is of two types namely literary or primary epic and oral or secondary epic. Homer's *Iliad* and Milton's *Paradise Lost* are the literary epics while The Mahabharata is the oral epic. But in the Augustan Age a distinguished type of parody by name *mock epic* came into existence. A masterpiece of this type is Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* which narrates at length, a trivial subject matter of Arabella Fermor by her admirer Lord Peter who becomes the Baron in the story, while she is given the name of Belinda. In the words of Dr. Johnson,

Apart from being a brilliant narrative, tour de force, 'The Rape of the Lock' is the greatest mock-heroic poem in English literature.

The title of the poem is suggested by the story of Iliad's *The Rape of Helen*. Pope uses all conventions of the epic. Though 'slight is the subject', he enlarges upon it with

philosophical seriousness. As a serious epic, Pope invokes the Muse at the beginning. For instance,

I sing, – This verse to Carryl, Muse is due:  
This ev'n Belinda may vouchsafe to view  
Slight is the subject, but not so the priase,  
If she inspire, and He approve my Lays.

These lines throw light on the invocation to Muse by Pope in completing the great poem.

Later Pope introduces the supernatural elements as in all serious epics. He introduces the four orders of spirits – sylphs, gnomes, nymphs and salamanders. These supernatural beings are parallel to Milton's good and bad angels. These sylphs as Geoffery Tilloston rightly calls,

The Gods of the epic are stupendous creatures; Pope's sylphs are tiny.

The speeches made by the spirits remind us of the speeches of Satan in *Paradise Lost*.

The toilet scene, in Canto I, is presented as a mystic, religious rite in classical fashion.

Unveiled the Toilet stands displa'd  
Each silver vase in mystic order laid  
First robbed in white, the Nymph intent adores,  
With Head uncover'd the cosmetic Powr's  
A heavenly image in the Glass appears.

These lines reveal to us the heavenly beauty of Belinda's toilet. There is a glittering account of Belinda at her dressing table. The toilet is turned into a rite of pride to flatter female vanity. The description actually parodies the arming of the epic hero Achilles for battle.

There are countless treasures which are displayed skillfully and described as offerings. Betty decorates Belinda with all of them. Betty takes out pearls and gems of India from one box. She takes out all the perfumes of Arabia from another box. She picks up ivory combs to dress Belinda's hair. She also takes out rows of shining pins, powders, beauty patches, and love letters. Betty makes use of all these things to enhance the beauty of Belinda. Belinda, after decoration, is surrounded by the fairies. Some sylphs fold her sleeve, some divide her hair, while some others plait her gown. For all these labours Betty gets the credit at the end of Canto I.

Canto II begins with Belinda's setting out by boat on the river Thames for Hampton Court Palace. She is accompanied by "Nymphs" and gentleman. Her charms include "the sparkling Cross she wore" on her "white breast," her "quick" eyes and "lively looks," and the easy grace with which she bestows her smiles and attentions evenly among all the adoring guests. There are two ringlets that dangle on her "iv'ry neck." These curls are

described as love's labyrinths, specifically designed to ensnare any poor heart who might get entangled in them.

One of the young gentlemen on the boat, the Baron, particularly admires Belinda's locks. But determines to steal them for himself. He sacrifices several tokens and prostrates himself before a pyre built with "all the trophies of his former loves," fanning its flames with his "am'rous sighs." The gods listen to his prayer but decides to grant only half of it.

As the pleasure-boat continues on its way, everyone is carefree except Ariel, who remembers that some bad event has been foretold for the day. He summons an army of sylphs, who assemble around him in their iridescent beauty. He says:

The flutt'ring Fan be *Zephyretta's* Care;  
 The Drops to thee, *Brillante*, ...  
 And, *Momentilla*, let the watch be thine;  
 Do thou, *Crispissa*, tend her fav'rite Lock;  
*Ariel* himself shall be the guard of *Shock* ...  
 Some, Orb in Orb, around the Nymph extend,  
 Some thrid the mazy Ringlets of her Hair,  
 Some hang upon the Pendants of her Ear;  
 With beating Hearts the dire Event they wait

Thus, Canto II ends with a clear warning to all the supernatural machineries given by Ariel to protect Belinda's locks and her beauty. Hazlitt observes thus:

In *The Rape of the Lock* the little is made great and the great little.  
 The poem is the perfection of the mock-heroic or mock-epic.

**THE SCHOOL BOY**

William Blake (1757-1827)

I love to rise in a summer morn  
When the birds sing on every tree;  
The distant huntsman winds his horn,  
And the skylark sings with me.  
Oh, what sweet company!

But to go to school in a summer morn,  
Oh! it drives all joy away;  
Under a cruel eye outworn  
The little ones spend the day  
In sighing and dismay.

Ah! then at times I drooping sit,  
And spend many an anxious hour;  
Nor in my book can I take delight,  
Nor sit in learning's bower,  
Worn through with the dreary shower.

How can the bird that is born for joy  
Sit in a cage and sing?  
How can a child, when fears annoy,  
But droop his tender wing,  
And forget his youthful spring?

O, father and mother, if buds are nipped  
And blossoms blown away,  
And if the tender plants are stripped  
Of their joy in the springing day,  
By sorrow and care's dismay,

How shall the summer arise in joy,  
Or the summer fruits appear?  
Or how shall we gather what griefs destroy,  
Or bless the mellowing year,  
When the blasts of winter appear?

**About the Author**

**William Blake**, English poet, painter, and engraver, who created a unique form of illustrated verse; his poetry, inspired by mystical vision, is among the most original, lyric, and prophetic in the English language. His work in the literary and visual arts marks a rejection of the Age of Enlightenment in favour of the new Romantic movement.

Blake, the son of a hosier, was born on November 28, 1757, in London, where he lived most of his life. Largely self-taught, he was, however, widely read—his poetry shows the influence of the German mystic Jakob Boehme, for example, and of Swedenborgianism (see Swedenborg, Emanuel). As a child, Blake wanted to become a painter, and by the age of 12

he was diligently collecting prints. He was also writing poetry: the lyric “How sweet I roam’d from Field to Field” is thought to have been written before he was 12. Blake was sent to a good drawing school when 10 years old and at the age of 14 was apprenticed to James Basire, an engraver. The young Blake had to draw the monuments in the old churches of London, a task that he thoroughly enjoyed.

After his seven-year term was over, he studied briefly at the newly formed Royal Academy in 1778, but he rebelled against the aesthetic doctrines of its president, Sir Joshua Reynolds, an advocate of Neo-Classicism who took a very academic approach to the study of art. Blake preferred to draw from his imagination. There is a well-known story that, as a child, he returned home from a walk saying he had seen a tree filled with angels, their wings sparkling. This angered his father as a lie, but his mother intervened to save him from a beating. Blake continued to see such “visions” throughout his life. As an adult he was recorded as saying to a friend, “[y]ou can see what I do if you choose. Work up imagination to the state of vision, and the thing is done”. At the Royal Academy, he did, however, establish friendships with such artists as John Flaxman and Henry Fuseli, whose work may have influenced him.

In 1782, Blake married Catherine Boucher, who proved a devoted wife. In 1784 they set up a print-sellers’ shop with another engraver and Blake’s brother, Robert, who died in 1787. During this period, Flaxman introduced Blake to a wide circle of literary friends and financed the publication of his first volume, *Poetical Sketches* (1783). At about this time, also, Blake wrote the satirical fragment *An Island in the Moon* that makes fun of scientific dilettantism, and includes such characters as “Inflammable Gas”, thought to be Joseph Priestley. The print-sellers’ shop failed after three years, and for the rest of his life Blake eked out a living as an engraver and illustrator. His wife helped him to print the illuminated poetry for which he is famous today.

### Early Poetry

The volume published by Flaxman was a collection of Blake’s youthful verse. Amid its traditional derivative elements are hints of his later innovative style and themes. As with all his poetry, this volume reached few contemporary readers. In 1789, unable to find a publisher for his *Songs of Innocence*, he and his wife engraved and printed them at home, and also produced *The Book of Thel*. Both these early works display stylistic and ideological characteristics that become more marked in Blake’s later work. *The Book of Thel* represents the maiden, Thel, lamenting change and mutability by the banks of a river, where she is comforted by the lily, the cloud, the worm, and the clod. Yet the final section, with its vivid and horrible images of death, seems to contradict the explicit Christian message of the rest of the poem. Blake also wrote *Tiriell* around 1789, although it was not published until 1874. *Songs of Innocence*, now probably Blake’s most famous work, is written in a lyric style of great freshness and directness. Here is the “Nurse’s Song” from *Songs of Innocence*, quoted in full:

When the voices of children are heard on the green  
And laughing is heard on the hill,  
My heart is at rest within my breast  
And everything else is still.

“Then come home, my children, the Sun is gone down  
“And the dews of night arise,

"Come, come, leave off play, and let us away  
 "Till the morning appears in the skies."  
 "No, no, let us play, for it is yet day  
 "And we cannot go to sleep;  
 "Besides in the sky the little birds fly  
 "And the hills are all cover'd with sheep."  
 "Well, well, go & play till the light fades away  
 "And then go home to bed."  
 The little ones leaped & shouted & laugh'd  
 And all the hills echoed.

In 1794, disillusioned by the apparent impossibility of human perfection, Blake issued *Songs of Experience*, employing the same lyric style, and often using the same titles and themes as in *Songs of Innocence*, but perverting the sing-song rhythms so that they seem sinister and resonant with a darker meaning. Here is the "Nurse's Song" from *Songs of Experience*:

When the voices of children are heard on the green  
 And whisp'rings are in the dale,  
 The days of my youth rise fresh in my mind,  
 My face turns green and pale.  
 Then come home my children, the Sun is gone down,  
 And the dews of the night arise;  
 Your spring & your day are wasted in play,  
 And your winter and night in disguise.

Innocence and Experience, "the two contrary states of the human soul", are contrasted here, and both series of poems take on greater resonance when read together. The innocence of childhood is contrasted with the corruption and repression of the adult world. Blake's subsequent poetry develops the implication that true innocence is impossible without experience, transformed by the creative force of the imagination.

### The Prophetic Books

The so-called Prophetic Books were the major project of Blake's life. In a series of poems written from 1789 onward, Blake created a complex personal mythology and invented his own symbolic characters to reflect his social concerns. A true original in thought and expression, he declared in one of these poems "I must Create a System or be enslav'd by another Man's". Poems such as *The French Revolution* (1791), *America, a Prophecy* (1793), *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793), and *Europe, a Prophecy* (1794) all express his condemnation of 18th-century political and social tyranny, and his contempt for literary convention and restraint. The "Preludium" to *The (First) Book of Urizen* invokes the visionary imagination: "Eternals! I hear your calls gladly / Dictate swift winged words & fear not / To unfold your dark visions of torment". Much of the prophetic poetry dramatizes the conflicts between Urizen, the symbol of repressive morality, and Orc, the Promethean arch-rebel. *The Book of Urizen* (1794) is specifically concerned with theological tyranny, and the dreadful cycle set in motion by the mutual exploitation of the sexes is vividly described in "The Mental Traveller" (c. 1803). It was in 1803, also, that Blake was arrested and charged at Chichester with high treason, for having "uttered seditious and treasonable expressions, such as 'D—n the King, d—n all his subjects'". Blake maintained that "the



whole accusation is a wilful Perjury”, and he was acquitted. This incident perhaps serves as a reminder that freethinking was not readily tolerated in Blake’s time, and the espousal of radical views necessarily set him apart from the rest of his generation. He often expresses this feeling of social isolation: “O why was I born with a different face? / Why was I not born like the rest of my race?” he rhymed in a letter to Thomas Butts in 1803. Among the Prophetic Books is a prose work, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790-1793), which owes much to the ideas of Swedenborg and develops Blake’s idea that “without Contraries is no progression”. It includes the “Proverbs of Hell”, such as “The tygers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction”.

The great visionary epics came late in Blake’s career. *Milton* (1804-1808), *Vala, or The Four Zoas* (that is, aspects of the human soul, 1797; rewritten after 1800), and *Jerusalem* (1804-1820) have neither traditional plot, characters, rhyme, nor metre; the rhetorical free-verse lines demand new modes of reading. They envision a new and higher kind of innocence, the human spirit triumphant over reason, as a quotation from *Jerusalem* illustrates: “Awake, Awake Jerusalem! O lovely Emanation of Albion, / Awake and overspread all Nations as in Ancient Time; / For lo! the Night of Death is past and the Eternal Day / Appears upon our Hills. Awake, Jerusalem, and come away!”

Blake died largely unknown, and for many years he was considered, by William Wordsworth among others, to have been insane and merely an interesting oddity. It was only later in the 19th century that his work was rediscovered by Algernon Swinburne and W. M. Rossetti: the latter brought out an edition in 1874 that added previously unknown poems to the canon and excited a new interest. W. B. Yeats produced a three-volume edition in 1893. Blake, although rightly acknowledged today as a great poet and artist, perhaps remains the poet’s poet. His work has influenced poets as diverse as the Beat Generation of the 1950s, W. H. Auden, and Emily Dickinson.

### **A Brief Summary and Analysis of the Poem**

“The School Boy” is taken from *The Songs of Experience* written by William Blake. In this poem, the poet pities the depressed school boy. The school boy is innocent. He loves the sweet company of singing birds and the morning hunters. So he likes to rise in a summer morning. At that time the distant hunters play their pipes and the skylark sings. The boy also wants to sing with them. He likes their sweet company. He does not like to go to school at such a time. Going to school then is an unpleasant task since it kills all joy. It is indeed a great cruelty to force the little ones to spend the day sighing and dismayed under a cruel teacher.

In the classroom, he sits sorrowfully. He does not find any joy in his book and its lessons as taught by the teacher. He remains inattentive for a long time. He is anxious to get relief from the school. He feels tired of receiving lessons. He is comparable to a caged bird. Just as the bird is not satisfied with merely singing inside a cage, he is also not satisfied with the lessons in the classroom. He wants freedom. He dislikes restraints and restrictions.

He asks how the summer season can appear beautiful, if tender plants are nipped of their buds and blossoms. Similarly life will lose all its charm and beauty, if boys are turned into old men in their rising childhood, and if youth is deprived of its joy under the influence of sorrow and fear. Hence a boy should be allowed to have his natural development. The poem reveals Blake’s rejection of set rules and regulations and conventional morality.

## Analysis

"The School-Boy" is a six-stanza poem of five lines each. Each stanza follows an ABABB rhyme scheme, with the first two stanzas using the same word "morn" to rhyme in the first lines. The repetition of the word "morn" as well as similarly low-sounding words such as "outworn," "bower," "dismay," and "destroy" lend the poem a bleak tone in keeping with the school-boy's attitude at being trapped inside at school rather than being allowed to move freely about the countryside on this fine summer day.

Blake suggests that the educational system of his day destroys the joyful innocence of youth; Blake himself was largely self-educated and did not endure the drudgery of the classroom as a child. Again, the poet wishes his readers to see the difference between the freedom of imagination offered by close contact with nature, and the repression of the soul caused by Reason's demands for a so-called education.

## Imagery and symbolism

This poem depends upon three inter-related images, the schoolboy, the bird and the plant. All three are dependent upon, or vulnerable to, the way in which they are treated by human beings.

**Schoolboy** - The image of the child here focuses on his nature as free and unfettered. He is associated with the spring as a time for growth, freshness and playfulness. As such, the child represents the playful, free nature of the creative imagination. According to Blake, this was fettered by subjection to the demands of a system which denies the validity of imagination. In *The School Boy*, formal education involves subjection to a 'cruel' eye and cruelty in Blake is always linked with the denial of imaginative freedom and of the spiritual self.

**Bird** - The bird imagery allows for the comparison between the free child being imprisoned in school and the songbird being caged. The unity between bird and boy is emphasised in stanza one. The sky-lark 'sings with me'. This inverts our expectations. We tend to think of the sky-lark as the primary singer, with whom people might sing along. Here, however, it is the child who is the first singer. It is as natural to him as to the lark, as though he were another bird.

Birds are also images of freedom. Their capacity for flight and for song makes them appropriate images of creative imagination, since poets 'sing' and imagination is often linked with the notion of flight. The schoolboy in school and the bird in the cage are, therefore, seen as equivalents not only at the natural level, under physical subjection, but at the spiritual level, too. Both represent the caging and entrapping of imaginative vision.

**Plant** - The image of the plant applies to the school boy's present and future. The young plant, like the young child, is tender and vulnerable. The way it (and the child) is treated at this stage dictates its later capacity to bear fruit. Just as food gathered in autumn is necessary to ensure survival through the winter, so experiences of joy and the freedom of the imagination are necessary for a person's capacity to live well and survive the inevitable 'griefs' of life.

**Essay Question:****1. Write a note on the experience that the boy undergoes in “The School Boy.”**

William Blake is a famous poet, painter, mystic, engraver, and philosopher. “The School Boy” is a poem taken from his collection of poems entitled *Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience*. Here, the poet vividly describes the feelings of a boy while going to school. During Blake’s days, the school teachers were cruel and tyrannical. Hence, the boy is reluctant to go to school where he enjoys neither peace nor freedom.

The boy wakes up early in the mornings and gets ready to go to school. Birds sing on every tree. The distant hunter blows his horn inviting his friends to go for hunting. The birds sing cheerfully. Leaving such sweet company of Nature, the boy has to go to school even in summer. It makes the boy sad and gloomy. He spends his time in school in sighing and sorrowfully as he does not have any pleasure.

Learning is not a matter of joy. The young boy spends his hours in school in anxiety, sorrow and tension. Even books do not provide him any pleasure. School is not learning lover. As a caged bird cannot sing, a boy without freedom and pleasure cannot learn.

As buds become blossoms with care and protection, children grow into adults only under careful guidance with love and affection. Flowers become fruits only when there are no gales or winds. Similarly, children grow only in congenial atmosphere of peace, protection, love, care, affection, and freedom.

Wordsworth uses many pastoral images in the poem. The poet beautifully concentrates on the possibilities of innocence, that always does the right things and learn right things from Nature. It can be done without man-made restrictions and discipline. The poem is highly symbolic and suggestive in its theme and treatment.

**2. Write a critical appreciation of Blake’s “The School Boy.”**

The poem “The School Boy” was written by William Blake, it is part of his “Songs of Innocence” published in 1789. In the poem the poet talks about a child that wakes up in the morning and all the happiness he feels disappears when he realizes that he has to go to school.

The main theme is the sorrow that the boy feels having to go to school, when he wants to enjoy summer. He has the obligation to go to a close space, but he wants to go outside.

Another theme is nature, the freedom that it represents for the boy and the oppression of the class. This repression is also represented by the boy’s parents who force him to go there.

It is written in first person, the word “I” is quite present in the poem and refers to Blake himself.

In my opinion, the author, William Blake, when he wrote the poem as an adult, he still remembered an experience of his childhood. He wrote the poem from a child’s viewpoint.

He wrote his child feelings in a summer morning and in a way, his complaint to his parents. Maybe, now he as an adult has voice and he uses it, because if you are a child everybody ignores you.

Taking into account that this book is written for children, Blake knows that children may feel in the same way as him and can help them.

According to the tone, the poem can be divided in three parts:

- 1<sup>st</sup> stanza, when the child wakes up and is happy
- 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> when he feels sorrows because he cannot enjoy
- The rest, it is a kind of claim directed to the reader in general or to his parents

So, the poem starts in a very positive way, but this only happens in the beginning. Then, it changes radically and the tone is very pessimistic. We are aware of the boy's feelings. He passes from joy to sorrow.

The poem is structured in 6 stanzas, with 5 lines each one. The rhyme scheme is: 1<sup>st</sup> line with 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 2<sup>nd</sup> with 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> (ababb). The lines are no longer than 10 syllables. They vary between 6 and 10.

There are some key images present in the poem. The first is the image of the birds. Blake uses the bird as if it was the child himself. The birds sing happily when they are free, but if they are in a cage they cannot do it the same way. In the same way the boy feels, he is imprisoned at school.

Another image is the summer time, the boy sees summer as a way of being free, but instead of being outside, he is in a class. For him it is winter, because he cannot enjoy the good weather as nature does in summer. These images serve to contrast the reality of the boy and his real desires.

There are also other features as the continuous contrast between outside-inside, summer-winter, and joy-sorrow. Some exclamations: O! Ah! That contributes to create the tone of sorrow of the boy. And something important in the poem are the rhetorical questions that are half of the poem. The boy asks those questions trying to get answers, because he does not understand why he has to go to school. He wants an answer or maybe a solution to it.

When we first read the poem we identify with the school boy, and we think that everyone can feel the same way. We get up in the morning and we are happy, but then we remember that we have to go to school and it is a very sad feeling like that.

We are not able to do what we want, we have to go to school, and there we don't pay very much attention to the lessons. Time passes very slow and the class never ends. And this feeling may be worst if the classes are in summer. When this happens who do we blame for? Our parents, as the boy does. So, in general this is a poem that can be read and understood easily, if we are a child or even if we are older.

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**Unit 2 (A) - Background**  
**Development of Drama: 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Century English Drama**

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**The Aristotelian Concept of Tragedy**

Aristotle's *Poetics* is a lopsided work. Most of it is devoted to the consideration of tragedy in all its aspects and constituent parts. Seventeen chapters out of twenty-six are devoted exclusively to a discussion of tragedy, and these chapters form the main body of the whole work. Thus it becomes clear that the *Poetics* is concerned chiefly with tragedy that is regarded as the highest poetic form. Abercrombie says thus:

The theory of tragedy is worked out with such insight and comprehension, that it becomes the type of the theory of literature.

Aristotle begins by point out that imitation is the common basis of all the fine arts, which, however, differ from each other in their medium of imitation, their objects of imitation, and their manner of imitation. Thus poetry differs from painting and music in its medium of imitation. Poetry itself is divisible into epic and drama on the basis of its manner of imitation. The epic narrates, while the dramatic represents through action. The dramatic poetry itself is distinguished as tragic or comic on the basis of its objects of imitation. Tragedy imitates men as better, and comedy as worse, than they really are.

Aristotle defines tragedy, thus, "tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions." This definition has wide implications. It falls, naturally into two parts. The first part, from 'the imitation of an action' to 'and not narrative,' is concerned with tragedy as one of the imitative arts, and points out its medium, objects, and manner of imitation. The second part is concerned with the function and emotional effects of tragedy.

Tragedy imitates 'actions' and its plot consists of a logical and inevitable sequence of events. The action it imitates is its plot. The action must be complete, i.e., it must have a beginning, a middle and an end. "The beginning is that from which further action flows out, and which is intelligible in itself and not consequent or dependent on any previous situation." Indeed, throughout *Poetics*, Aristotle lays great emphasis on the probability and necessity of the action of a tragedy. There must be a casual connection between the various events and incidents and they must follow each other naturally and inevitably.

As regards the function of tragedy, Aristotle points out that it is to present scenes of 'fear' and 'pity,' and thus to bring about to 'catharsis' of these emotions. By the catharsis of such emotions as pity and fear, he means their restoration to the right proportions, to the desirable, 'mean' to the 'golden mean,' which is the basis of his discussion of human qualities in the 'ethics.'



Aristotle enumerates six formative elements of a tragedy: plot, character, diction, thought, spectacle and song.

Two of these parts constitute 'the medium of imitation' (diction and song), one 'the manners' (spectacle) and three 'the objects of imitation.' (plot, thought, and character). Aristotle considers 'plot' as the most important constituent of a tragedy. For him plot is, 'the soul of a tragedy' character holds the second place, third in order is 'thought.' "Thought is the faculty of saying what is possible and pertinent in given circumstances." Fourth among the elements comes 'diction,' by which Aristotle means 'the expression of meaning in words.' Song holds fifth place. Spectacle is the least artistic and connected with the art of poetry. Besides the production of spectacular effects depends more on the art of the person in charge of the stage or that of the poet.

The most important constituent of tragedy, according to Aristotle, is 'plot.' "The plot is the first principle and as it is there, the soul of tragedy." By plot Aristotle means the arrangement of incidents. Incidents mean action and tragedy is an imitation of actions, both external and internal, i.e., it also imitates the mental processes of the dramatic personae. Aristotle insists that the tragic plot must have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Its parts must be properly related to each other and to the whole it must be of an appropriate or reasonable size, neither too short nor too long. It must have the unity of a living organism.

Aristotle divides the plots of tragedies into two kinds namely simple and complex. Simple plots have continuous movements in them and there are no violent changes. Complex plots are those which have peripety and anagnorisis or discovery or recognition. "A peripety is the change from one state of things to its opposite ... in the probable or necessary sequence of events." For example, in *Oedipus Rex* the opposite state of thing is produced by the messenger, who, coming to gladden Oedipus and remove his fears as to his mother, reveals the secret of his birth. A discovery as the very word implies, is a change from ignorance to knowledge. The finest form of discovery is one attended by peripety, as in *Oedipus Rex*.

Peripety and Anagnorisis are the two hinges of a complex plot. Most Aristotlean scholars agree that peripety means a sudden change from good to bad. It may be a 'reversal of expectation or frustration of purpose.' According to Atkins: "It is a kind of irony of action which takes place when deeds are caught up out of an agent's grasp and charged with a meaning the very opposite of what was meant." Hence the best plot is one which shows a good man, but not a perfectly good one, suffering and consequence of some error or fault, 'hamartia' on his part. In Aristotle's conception "hamartia, peripetia and anagnorisis all hang together in the ideal schematization of the tragic plot." Hamartia is the tragic error and is related to the character of the hero, but in a successful plot it is so closely worked into the plot as to be inseparable from it. The miscalculation of the hero causes a chain of incidents which result in the change from good fortune to bad, which the tragic plot depicts.



As regards characterization in general, Aristotle lays down four essential qualities. First, the character must be good, secondly, they must be appropriate, thirdly, they must have likeness, and fourthly, they must have consistency. The characters should be good but not too good or perfect. Aristotle is only against the wanton introduction of evil and wickedness. In a tragedy dealing with the life of king Oedipus, the character of Oedipus must have likeness to the traditional conception of his character. The characters must show a consistent development; if there is an inconsistent character, he must be represented as inconsistent throughout. There must be no sudden and unaccountable changes in character.

According to Aristotle an ideal tragic hero should neither be perfectly good nor utterly bad. He is a man of ordinary weaknesses and virtues, learning more to the side of the good than of evil, occupying a position of high eminence and falling into ruin from that eminence, not because of any deliberate wickedness but because of some error of judgement on his part.

Aristotle emphasizes only one of the unities, the unity of action; he is against plurality of action as it weakens the tragic effect. There might be a number of incidents but they must be causally connected with each other, and they must all be conducive to one effect, the effect aimed at by the dramatist. As regards the unity of time, he only once mentions time in relation to dramatic action. He never mentions unity of place at all.

The end of tragedy is to give pleasure and tragedy has its own distinctive pleasure. It brings us a sense of relief through catharsis. The peculiar pleasure of tragedy is caused by the catharsis of the emotions of pity and fear.

Such are the main features of Aristotle's theory of tragedy. The theory might have its weaknesses; Aristotle knew only Greek tragedy, his conclusions are based entirely on the drama with which he was familiar, and hence often his views are not of universal application. But despite all that can be said against it,

Aristotle's theory of tragedy is the foundation on which all subsequent discussion on literary aesthetics has most securely based itself.

### Tragic Flaw

Aristotle says that the tragic hero will most effectively evoke both our pity and terror. He is neither thoroughly good nor thoroughly bad but a mixture of both; and also that this tragic effect will be stronger if the hero is “better than we are,” in the sense that he is of higher than ordinary moral worth. Such a man is exhibited as suffering a change in fortune from happiness to misery because of his mistaken choice of an action, to which he is led by his ‘hamartia’ – his ‘error of judgement’ or, as it is often though less literally translated, his tragic flaw. The tragic hero, like Oedipus in Sophocles’ *Oedipus the King*, moves us to pity because, since he is not an evil man, his misfortune is greater than he deserves; but he moves us also to fear, because we recognize similar possibilities of error in our own lesser and fallible selves.

The tragic hero is a man of high status and noble qualities. It is the one fatal flaw in his character that brings ruin upon him at the end. The tragic hero embarks upon a course by which his ruin is eventually assured because, in spite of all his virtues and noble qualities, he suffers from a serious error in his character which ultimately overwhelms him. Fate and the intervention of the supernatural hasten the tragic course undertaken by the hero because of his fatal flaw. A.C. Bradley has pointed out how Shakespeare’s tragic heroes have fatal flaw. Hamlet, in spite of his nobility, suffers from disastrous indecision. Othello’s fall is due to his jealousy and Macbeth is led to destruction by his mounting ambition. King Lear’s wrath and lack of judgement cause his tragedy. The concept of tragic flaw is an aspect of the belief that character is destiny and man is responsible for his actions.

### The Rise of Comedy of Humours

Like Tragedy, the word 'comedy' has also been derived from the Greek root 'komos' which means 'revel or pleasure.' Later it is applied to a play that amuses the audience. The comedy that Ben Jonson presents is the realistic, satirical comedy which is generally known as the *Comedy of Humours*. Though Chapman's *An Humorous Day's Mirth* is called a 'Comedy of Humours', it was Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour* that ushered a new era in dramaturgy thereby firmly establishing the 'Comedy of Humours' as a dramatic form. He has provided a practical theory of comedy derived from his understanding of human physiology and psychology. His comedy is based on the ancient physiological theory of *four humours* – blood, phlegm, choler (or) yellow bile, and melancholy (or) black bile – which determine the health and mental stability of every individual. When these secretions are in balance, the human body and mind perform in perfect harmony. But when there is an imbalance in the body, the dominant humour creates an overload of one aspect of a person's temperament. This imbalance was seen as the root cause of abnormal behavior and served, for Jonson, as the origin of comic character. Thus, he gave it a new structural form and the critical principles upon which it is mainly based.

Deeds, and language, such as men do use:  
And persons, such as comedy would choose  
When she would show an Image of the times,  
And sport with human follies, not with crimes.

The following are some of the chief characteristic features of the 'Comedy of Humours.'

The 'Comedy of Humours' deals with *types* of character rather than with personalities. The dramatists employ only such language as is normally used by people in daily life. In other words, the language is used keeping in mind the characters and the situations. The plays plead for realism through the treatment of common things in common language.

The 'Comedy of Humours' mirrors the life of the people thereby showing an image of the times. These plays also give us a powerful picture of follies and foibles of the Elizabethans. The plays not only please and amuse the audience but also teach them something about themselves. Besides these features, the plays provide profit and delight. C.N. Herford rightly observes on Ben Jonson's contribution to 'comedy of humours' thus:

No English dramatist had yet attempted comedy on the basis of so severe an interpretation of its scope as a picture of follies and foibles.

### Shakespearean Tragedy

A tragedy is a term broadly applied to literary, and especially to dramatic, representations of serious actions which eventuate in a disastrous conclusion for the protagonist. To effect such a catharsis the dramatist must move the audience; he must have a capacity to feel the pathos of human suffering, a strong moral sense and great craftsmanship. Shakespeare possessed these qualities.

Shakespeare wrote tragedies from the beginning of his career. One of his earliest plays was the Roman tragedy *Titus Andronicus*, which he followed a few years later with *Romeo and Juliet*. However, his most admired tragedies were written in a seven-year period between 1601 and 1608. These include his four major tragedies *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth*, along with *Antony & Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus*, *Cymbeline*, *Julius Caesar* and the lesser-known *Timon of Athens* and *Troilus and Cressida*.

Shakespeare was either unaware of or indifferent to didactic, and adopted, then adapted some of their features, including the five act structure and the aforementioned train of bad decisions, culminating in an eventual 'stoic calm' of the protagonist, in which the character virtuously accepts the consequences of their error(s) - "Lay on, Macduff," in "Macbeth". The following fourteen points are a summation of a typical Shakespearean tragedy.

1. Tragedy is concerned primarily with one person – The tragic hero.
2. The story is essentially one of exceptional suffering and calamity leading to the death of the hero. The suffering and calamity are, as a rule, unexpected and contrasted with previous happiness and glory.
3. The tragedy involves a person of high estate. Therefore, his or her fate affects the welfare of a whole nation or empire.
4. The hero undergoes a sudden reversal of fortune.
5. This reversal excites and arouses the emotions of pity and fear within the audience. The reversal may frighten and awe, making viewers or readers of the play feel that man is blind and helpless. The audience will regard the tragic hero as an individual who is up against an overwhelming power that may treat him well for a short period of time, but will eventually strike him down in his pride.
6. The tragic fate of the hero is often triggered by a tragic flaw in the hero's character. The hero contributes in some way, shape, or form to the disaster in which he perishes.
7. Shakespeare often introduces abnormal conditions of the mind (such as insanity, somnambulism, or hallucinations).
8. Supernatural elements are often introduced as well.
9. Much of the plot seems to hinge on "chance" or "accident".
10. Besides the outward conflict between individuals or groups of individuals, there is also an inner conflict(s) and torment(s) within the soul of the tragic hero.
11. The tragic hero need not be an overwhelmingly "good" person, however, it is necessary that he/she should contain so much greatness that in his/her fall the audience may be vividly conscious of the individual's potential for further success, but

also the temptation of human nature. Therefore, a Shakespearean tragedy is never depressing because the audience can understand where the hero went wrong.

12. The central impression of the tragedy is one of waste.
13. The tragic world is one of action. Action is created when thoughts turn into reality. Unfortunately for the tragic hero, their plans do not materialize as they may have hoped and their actions ultimately lead to their own destruction.
14. The ultimate power in the tragic world is a moral order; more specifically, the struggle between good and evil.
  - a) The main source of the problems which produces all the death and suffering is evil in the fullest sense.
  - b) This evil violently disturbs the moral order of the world.
  - c) Evil is seen as something negative, barren, weakening, destructive, a principle of death. It isolates, disunites, and annihilates. Only while some vestiges of good remain in the hero, can he/she still exist. When the evil masters the good in the hero, it destroys him/her and those around them.
  - d) This evil is eventually destroyed and the moral order of the world is re-established.

### **The Development of Historical Drama**

Historical dramas are dramatic portrayals of events in history. These dramas may be portrayed on the theatrical stage, in film, television or literature. By nature, the historical drama should not be relied upon for historical accuracy. Historical dramas may be traced back to Elizabethan England, when playwrights such as William Shakespeare dramatized British history on the stage.

During the Renaissance of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, historical dramas tended to center around the lives of kings and nobles. Critics of the arts have condemned historical dramas for focusing too much on historical aspects, whereas historians disapprove of the dramas that exaggerate personalities and rearrange events for the sake of dramatic effect. Dramatists have also been praised for presenting history in the most engaging and relevant way possible.

Robert Metcalf Smith, author of *Types of Historical Drama*, asserts the importance of dramatists in the preservation of history. Smith begs the questions: "Is there such a thing as an objective history? Is history a bare chronicle of facts listed year by year on a musty vellum by some monk in a medieval monastery?" In order to make history understandable and applicable, historians will emphasize important facts and disregard facts that are of no interest. According to Smith, the dramatist should not be criticized for allowing the audience to relive history. During Shakespeare's time, historical dramas were often used as propaganda tools. Plays regarding the War of the Roses such as "Richard III" and the "Henry VI" series validated the reign of Elizabeth's Tudor dynasty. Other plays such as "Anthony and Cleopatra" placed emphasis on a woman's ability to rule and govern, thereby empowering the Virgin Queen. Smith enumerates the potentials of historical drama, claiming that the dramatist "may vitalize and recreate the splendor of the past; he may present a historical figure offering dramatic possibilities; he may employ historical events as a background for fictitious characters; he may present a social picture of a past era; or he may utilize history to give added interest to his main plot." History can and does promote dramatic plot.



### Restoration Comedy / Comedy of Manners

The word 'comedy' is usually applied to a play that has a happy ending. But the Restoration comedy has certain characteristic features. The re-establishment of Monarchy in England with the return of Charles II (1660) is usually called the Restoration Period. One of the characteristic genres of this period is Restoration comedy or comedy of manners. It was developed upon the reopening of the theatres. Its principal writers were Congreve, Etherege, Farquhar, Vanbrugh, and Wycherley. The writings that appeared during the period had certain salient features like love, wit, and gaiety often immorality. Its predominant tone was witty, bawdy, cynical, and amoral. The plots were complex and usually double, sometimes, triple, though repartee and discussion of marital behaviour provide much of the interest, reflecting the fashionable manners of the day. Standard characters include fops, bawds, scheming valets, country squires, and sexually voracious young widows and older women. The principle theme was sexual intrigue either for its own sake or for money. Playwrights came under heavy attack for frivolous, blasphemy, and immortality. Lamb in his thought provoking essay on 'Comedy' calls this 'the artificial comedy.' Examples for the Restoration Comedy are Congreve's *The Way of the World* and Sheridan's *The School for Scandal*. The themes of such comedies are farcical. They take us into the world of make belief. Bonamy Dobree observes thus:

The Restoration Comedy takes us away from our familiar surroundings into a world of make belief.

Usually the Restoration Comedy is known for its wit, humour, and repartee. In *The Way of the World*, Mirabell and others take to recourse to witty dialogues. Even in *The School for Scandal*, Lady Teazle and others express their witty remarks thus:

Sir Petre: When an old bachelor marries a young wife, what is he to expect?

In the words of Cleanth Brooks (Read his *Understanding Drama*)

The Restoration Comedy is an accurate mirror of the 17<sup>th</sup> century society and is intensely realistic.

The restoration comedy or comedy of manners lapsed in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, but was revived by many skillful dramatists, from A.W. Pinero and Oscar Wilde (*The Importance of Being Earnest*, 1895) through George Bernard Shaw to Neil Simon and others writers of the present era.

### Dryden's Defence of English Drama

John Dryden (9 August 1631 – 1 May 1700) was a prominent English poet, critic, translator, and playwright who dominated the literary life of the Restoration Age; therefore, the age is known as the Age of Dryden. He was a critic of contemporary reality. His critical observation of contemporary reality is reflected in *MacFlecknoe* (1682). His mature thoughts of literary criticism on ancient, modern and English Literature, especially on Drama, are presented in dialogue forms in *An Essay on Dramatic Poesy*. He defines drama as “Just and lively image of human nature, representing its passions and humours, and the changes of fortune to which it is subject, for the delight and instruction of mankind.”

According to the definition, drama is an ‘image’ of ‘human nature’, and the image is ‘just’ and ‘lively’. By using the word ‘just’ Dryden seems to imply that literature imitates (and not merely reproduces) human actions. For Dryden, ‘poetic imitation’ is different from an exact, servile copy of reality, for, the imitation is not only ‘just’, it is also ‘lively’.

In *An Essay on Dramatic Poesy* there are four speakers - Eugenius, Crites, Lisideius and Neander. Each one argues strongly as to which one is better, “Ancient or Modern, and French or English?” It presents a brief discussion on Neo-classical theory of Literature. He defends the classical drama saying that it is an imitation of life and reflects human nature clearly.

*An Essay on Dramatic Poesy* is written in the form of a dialogue among four gentlemen:. Neander speaks for Dryden himself. Eugenius favours modern English dramatists by attacking the classical playwrights, who did not themselves always observe the unity of place. But Crites defends the ancients and points out that they invited the principles of dramatic art paved by Aristotle and Horace. Crites opposes rhyme in plays and argues that though the moderns excel in sciences, the ancient age was the true age of poetry. Lisideius defends the French playwrights and attacks the English tendency to mix genres.

Neander speaks in favour of the Moderns and respects the Ancients; he is however critical of the rigid rules of dramas and favours rhyme. Neander who is a spokesperson of Dryden, argues that ‘tragic-comedy’ (Dryden’s phrase for what we now call ‘tragi-comedy’) is the best form for a play; because it is closer to life in which emotions are heightened by mirth and sadness. He also finds subplots as an integral part to enrich a play. He finds single action in French dramas to be rather inadequate since it so often has a narrowing and cramping effect.

Neander gives his palm to the violation of the three unities because it leads to the variety in the English plays. Dryden thus argues against the neo-classical critics. Since nobody speaks in rhyme in real life, he supports the use of blank verse in drama and says that the use of rhyme in serious plays is justifiable in place of the blank verse.

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**Unit 2 (B) – Drama Prescribed**

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**OTHELLO**

William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

**About the Author**

**William Shakespeare**, (1564-1616), English poet and playwright, recognized in much of the world as the greatest of all dramatists.

**Life**

A complete, authoritative account of Shakespeare's life is lacking; much supposition surrounds relatively few facts. His day of birth is traditionally held to be April 23; it is known he was baptized on April 26, 1564, in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire. The third of eight children, he was the eldest son of John Shakespeare, a locally prominent merchant, and Mary Arden, daughter of a Roman Catholic member of the landed gentry. He was probably educated at the local grammar school. As the eldest son, Shakespeare ordinarily would have been apprenticed to his father's shop so that he could learn and eventually take over the business, but according to one apocryphal account he was apprenticed to a butcher because of reverses in his father's financial situation. In recent years, it has more convincingly been argued that he was caught up in the secretive network of Catholic believers and priests who strove to cultivate their faith in the inhospitable conditions of Elizabethan England. At the turn of the 1580s, it is claimed, he served as tutor in the household of Alexander Houghton, a prominent Lancashire Catholic and friend of the Stratford schoolmaster John Cottom. While others in this network went on to suffer and die for their beliefs, Shakespeare must somehow have extricated himself, for there is little evidence to suggest any subsequent involvement in their circles. In 1582 he married Anne Hathaway, the daughter of a farmer. He is supposed to have left Stratford after he was caught poaching in the deer park of Sir Thomas Lucy, a local justice of the peace. Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway produced a daughter, Susanna, in 1583 and twins—a boy and a girl—in 1585. The boy died 11 years later.

Shakespeare apparently arrived in London in about 1588, and by 1592 had attained success as an actor and a playwright. Shortly thereafter, he secured the patronage of Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton. The publication of Shakespeare's two fashionably erotic narrative poems *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594) and of his *Sonnets* (published 1609, but circulated previously in manuscript) established his reputation as a gifted and popular Renaissance poet. The *Sonnets* describe the devotion of a character, often identified as the poet himself, to a young man whose beauty and virtue he praises and to a mysterious and faithless dark lady with whom the poet is infatuated. The ensuing triangular situation, resulting from the attraction of the poet's friend to the dark lady, is treated with passionate intensity and psychological insight. They are prized for their exploration of love in all its aspects, and a poem such as "Sonnet 18" is one of the most famous love poems of all time.

While the poem may be familiar, it is less well known that it is an exquisite celebration of a young man's beauty. The fact that 126 of the 154 sonnets are apparently addressed by a male poet to another man has caused some critical discomfort over the years. However, Shakespeare's modern reputation is based mainly on the 38 plays that he apparently wrote, modified, or collaborated on. Although generally popular in his day, these plays were

frequently little esteemed by his educated contemporaries, who considered English plays of their own day to be only vulgar entertainment.

Shakespeare's professional life in London was marked by a number of financially advantageous arrangements that permitted him to share in the profits of his acting company, the Lord Chamberlain's Company, later called the King's Men, and its two theatres, the Globe Theatre and the Blackfriars. His plays were given special presentation at the courts of Elizabeth I and James I more frequently than those of any other contemporary dramatists. It is known that he risked losing royal favour only once, in 1599, when his company performed "the play of the deposing and killing of King Richard II" at the request of a group of conspirators against Elizabeth. They were led by Elizabeth's unsuccessful court favourite, Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, and by the Earl of Southampton. In the subsequent inquiry, Shakespeare's company was absolved of complicity in the conspiracy.

After about 1608, Shakespeare's dramatic production lessened and it seems that he spent more time in Stratford. There he had established his family in an imposing house called New Place, and had become a leading local citizen. He died on April 23, 1616, and was buried in the Stratford church.

## Works

Although the precise date of many of Shakespeare's plays is in doubt, his dramatic career is generally divided into four periods: the first period, involving experimentation, although still clearly influenced by or imitating Classical models; the second period, in which Shakespeare appears to achieve a truly individual style and approach; a third, darker period, in which he wrote not only his major tragedies but also the more difficult comedies, known as the "problem plays" because their resolutions leave troubling and unanswered questions; and his final period, when his style blossomed in the romantic tragicomedies—exotic, symbolic pieces which while happily resolved involve a greater complexity of vision.

These divisions are necessarily arbitrary ways of viewing Shakespeare's creative development, since his plays are notoriously hard to date accurately, either in terms of when they were written or when they were first performed. Commentators differ and the dates in this article should be seen as plausible approximations. In all periods, the plots of his plays were frequently drawn from chronicles, histories, or earlier fiction, as were the plays of other contemporary dramatists.

### A. First Period

Shakespeare's first period was one of experimentation. His early plays, unlike his more mature work, are characterized to a degree by formal and rather obvious construction and often stylized verse.

Four plays dramatizing the English civil strife of the 15th century are possibly Shakespeare's earliest dramatic works. Chronicle history plays were a popular genre of the time. These plays, *Henry VI*, Parts I, II, and III (c. 1590-1592) and *Richard III* (c. 1593), deal with the evil results of weak leadership and of national disunity fostered for selfish ends. The cycle closes with the death of Richard III and the ascent to the throne of Henry VII, the founder of the Tudor dynasty, to which Elizabeth belonged. In style and structure, these plays are related partly to medieval drama and partly to the works of earlier Elizabethan dramatists, especially Christopher Marlowe. Either indirectly through such dramatists or directly, the influence of the Classical Roman dramatist Seneca is also reflected in the organization of these four plays, in the bloodiness of many of their scenes, and in their

highly coloured, bombastic language. Senecan influence, exerted by way of the earlier English dramatist Thomas Kyd, is particularly obvious in *Titus Andronicus* (c. 1590), a tragedy of righteous revenge for heinous and bloody acts, which are staged in sensational detail. While previous generations have found its violent excesses absurd or disgusting, some directors and critics since the 1960s have recognized in its horror the articulation of more contemporary preoccupations with the meanings of violence.

Shakespeare's comedies of the first period represent a wide range. *The Comedy of Errors* (c. 1592), an uproarious farce in imitation of Classical Roman comedy, depends for its appeal on the mistakes in identity of two sets of twins involved in romance and war. Farce is not so strongly emphasized in *The Taming of the Shrew* (c. 1592), a comedy of character. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (c. 1592-1593) depends on the appeal of romantic love. In contrast, *Love's Labour's Lost* (c. 1595) satirizes the loves of its main male characters as well as the fashionable devotion to studious pursuits by which these noblemen had first sought to avoid romantic and worldly ensnarement. The dialogue in which many of the characters voice their pretensions ridicules the artificially ornate, courtly style typified by the works of the English novelist and dramatist John Lyly, the court conventions of the time, and perhaps the scientific discussions of Sir Walter Raleigh and his cohorts.

## B. Second Period

Shakespeare's second period includes his most important plays concerned with English history, his so-called joyous comedies, and two major tragedies. In this period, his style and approach became highly individualized. The second-period historical plays include *Richard II* (c. 1595), *Henry IV*, Parts I and II (c. 1597), and *Henry V* (c. 1599). They cover the span immediately before that of the *Henry VI* plays. *Richard II* is a study of a weak, sensitive, self-dramatizing, but sympathetic monarch who loses his kingdom to his forceful successor, Henry IV. In the two parts of *Henry IV*, Henry recognizes his own guilt. His fears for his own son, later Henry V, prove unfounded, as the young prince displays an essentially responsible attitude towards the duties of kingship. In an alternation of masterful comic and serious scenes, the fat knight Falstaff and the rebel Hotspur reveal contrasting excesses between which the prince finds his proper position. The mingling of the tragic and the comic to suggest a broad range of humanity became one of Shakespeare's favourite devices.

Outstanding among the comedies of the second period is *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (c. 1595-1596). Its fantasy-filled insouciance is achieved by the interweaving of several plots involving two pairs of noble lovers, a group of bumbling and unconsciously comic townspeople, and members of the fairy realm, notably Puck, King Oberon, and Queen Titania. These three worlds are brought together in a series of encounters that veer from the magical to the absurd and back again in the space of only a few lines. In Act 3, for example, Oberon plays a trick on Titania while she sleeps, employing Puck to anoint her with a potion that will cause her to fall in love with the first creature she sees on waking. As luck would have it, she opens her eyes to the sight of Bottom the weaver, himself adorned by Puck with an ass's head. Yet the comic episode of the Queen of the Fairies "enamoured of an ass" (4.i.76) echoes the play's more profound concerns with the nature of the real.

Subtle evocation of atmosphere, of the sort that characterizes this play, is found also in the tragicomedy *The Merchant of Venice* (c. 1594-1598). The Renaissance motifs of masculine friendship and romantic love in this play are portrayed in opposition to the bitter inhumanity of a Jewish usurer named Shylock, whose own misfortunes are presented so as to arouse understanding and sympathy. While this play undoubtedly deals in the currency



of European anti-Semitism, its exploration of power and prejudice also enables a humanist critique of such bigotry. As Shylock himself says, confronted by the double standards of his Venetian opponents:

He hath disgraced me, and hindered me half a million; laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine enemies, and what's his reason?—I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions; fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is? If you prick us do we not bleed? If you tickle us do we not laugh? If you poison us do we not die? And if you wrong us shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that (3.i.50-63). The type of quick-witted, warm, and responsive young woman exemplified in this play by Portia reappears in the joyous comedies of the second period.

The witty comedy *Much Ado About Nothing* (c. 1598-1599) is marred, in the opinion of some critics, by an insensitive treatment of its female characters. However, Shakespeare's most mature comedies, *As You Like It* (c. 1599) and *Twelfth Night* (c. 1601), are characterized by lyricism, ambiguity, and the attraction of beautiful, charming, and strong-minded heroines such as Rosalind. In *As You Like It*, the contrast between the manners of the Elizabethan court and those current in the English countryside is drawn in a rich, sweet, and varied vein. Shakespeare constructed a complex pattern between different characters and between appearance and reality. He used this pattern to comment on a variety of human foibles. In that respect, *As You Like It* is similar to *Twelfth Night*, in which the comical side of love is illustrated by the misadventures of two pairs of romantic lovers and of a number of realistically conceived and clowning characters in the sub-plot. Yet there is a darker side even to these plays. In *Twelfth Night*, the conventional resolution is disrupted by the exclusion of Malvolio, a figure who has served as the butt of the comic sub-plot. Rather than participate in the concluding scene of forgiveness and reconciliation, he storms off stage with the words "I'll be reveng'd on the whole pack of you!" (5.i.377). Another comedy of the second period is *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (c. 1597); this play is a farce about middle-class life in which Falstaff reappears as the comic victim.

Two major tragedies, differing considerably in nature, mark the beginning and the end of the second period. *Romeo and Juliet* (c. 1595), famous for its poetic treatment of the ecstasy of youthful love, dramatizes the fate of two lovers victimized by the feuds and misunderstandings of their elders and by their own hasty temperaments. On the other hand, *Julius Caesar* (c. 1599) is a serious tragedy of political rivalries, less intense in style than the tragic dramas that followed.

### C. Third Period

Shakespeare's third period includes his greatest tragedies and his so-called dark or bitter comedies. The tragedies of this period are the most profound of his works and those in which his poetic idiom became an extremely supple dramatic instrument capable of recording the passage of human thought and the many dimensions of given dramatic situations. *Hamlet* (c. 1601), his most famous play, goes far beyond other tragedies of revenge in picturing the mingled sordidness and glory of the human condition. Hamlet feels that he is living in a world of deceit and corruption. It is the precipitous marriage of his mother to Claudius, his uncle, that is the source of his unease: the wedding has taken place barely two months after the sudden death of Hamlet's father, the king. His suspicions are



spectacularly confirmed by the appearance of the dead king's ghost. Confirming that he was murdered by Claudius, the ghost urges Hamlet to revenge. Yet this injunction is the trigger for a dramatic exploration of Hamlet's self-doubt, an introspective torment that leads him to the brink of suicide in perhaps the most famous Shakespearean line of all, "To be, or not to be, that is the question" (3.i.58). As Hamlet recognizes, his hesitancy is akin to the sleep of oblivion:

And thus the native hue of resolution  
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,  
And enterprises of great pith and moment  
With this regard their currents turn awry,  
And lose the name of action. (3.i.86-90)

Yet in regaining "the name of action", Hamlet brings about the self-destruction that his indecision had only mimicked. Through such density of character and language the play commands the affection and attention that is still accorded it today.

*Othello* (c. 1602-1604) portrays the growth of unjustified jealousy in the protagonist, Othello, a Moor serving as a general in the Venetian army. The innocent object of his jealousy is his wife, Desdemona. In this tragedy, Othello's evil lieutenant, Iago, draws him into mistaken jealousy in order to ruin him. *King Lear* (c. 1604-1606), conceived on a more epic scale, deals with the consequences of the irresponsibility and misjudgement of Lear, a ruler of early Britain, and of his councillor, the Duke of Gloucester. The tragic outcome is a result of giving power to his evil offspring, rather than to his good offspring. Lear's daughter Cordelia displays a redeeming love that makes the tragic conclusion a vindication of goodness, though a bleak resolution because Cordelia dies. This conclusion is reinforced by the portrayal of evil as self-defeating, exemplified by the fates of Cordelia's sisters and of Gloucester's opportunistic son. *Antony and Cleopatra* (c. 1606-1607) is concerned with a different type of love, namely the middle-aged passion of the Roman general Mark Antony for the Egyptian queen Cleopatra. Their love is glorified by some of the most sensuous poetry written by Shakespeare, as in this description of the Egyptian queen by Antony's friend, Enobarbus:

The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne  
Burned on the water. The poop was beaten gold;  
Purple the sails, and so perfumed that  
The winds were love-sick with them. The oars were silver,  
Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke, and made  
The water which they beat to follow faster,  
As amorous of their strokes. For her own person,  
It beggared all description. She did lie  
In her pavilion—cloth of gold, of tissue—  
O'er picturing that Venus where we see  
The fancy outwork nature. (2.ii.198-208)

In *Macbeth* (c. 1606), Shakespeare depicts the tragedy of a great and basically good man who, led on by others and because of a defect in his own nature, succumbs to murderous ambition. In getting and retaining the Scottish throne, Macbeth dulls his humanity to the point where he becomes capable of any amoral act. As with Hamlet, this retreat from a full humanity is paradoxically accompanied by a heightened self-awareness; yet for Macbeth

there is no redemption, only a descent into a bleak nihilism. Human existence, as he sees it, amounts to nothing:

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow  
 Creeps in this petty pace from day to day  
 To the last syllable of recorded time,  
 And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
 The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle.  
 Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player  
 That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,  
 And then is heard no more. It is a tale  
 Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
 Signifying nothing.

(5.iv.18-27)

Three other plays of this period suggest a bitterness that these tragedies more successfully contain, because the protagonists do not seem to possess greatness or tragic stature. In *Troilus and Cressida* (c. 1602), the most intellectually contrived of Shakespeare's plays, the gulf between the ideal and the real, both individually and politically, is skilfully evoked. In *Coriolanus* (c. 1608), another tragedy taking place in antiquity, the legendary Roman hero Caius Marcius Coriolanus is portrayed as unable to bring himself either to woo the Roman masses or to crush them by force. *Timon of Athens* (c. 1607) is a similarly bitter play about a character reduced to misanthropy by the ingratitude of his sycophants. Because of the uneven quality of the writing, this tragedy is considered to be a collaboration, quite possibly with Thomas Middleton.

The two comedies of this period also are dark in mood. In the 20th century these plays gained the name of "problem plays" because they do not fit into clear categories or present easy resolution. *All's Well That Ends Well* (c. 1598-1604) and *Measure for Measure* (c. 1604) are both plays that question accepted patterns of morality without offering the comfort of solutions.

#### D. Fourth Period

The fourth period of Shakespeare's work comprises his principal romantic tragicomedies. Towards the end of his career, Shakespeare created several plays that, through the intervention of magic, art, compassion, or grace, often suggest redemptive hope for the human condition. These plays are written with a grave quality differing considerably from his earlier comedies, but they end happily with a reunion or final reconciliation. The tragicomedies depend for part of their appeal upon the lure of a distant time or place, and all seem more obviously symbolic than most of his earlier works. To many critics, the tragicomedies signify a final ripeness in Shakespeare's own outlook, but other authorities believe that the change reflects only a change in fashion in the drama.

The romantic tragicomedy *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* (c. 1606-1608) concerns the title character's painful loss of his wife and the persecution of his daughter. After many exotic adventures, Pericles is reunited with his loved ones. In *Cymbeline* (c. 1609-1610) and *The Winter's Tale* (c. 1610-1611), characters suffer great loss and pain, but are reunited. Perhaps the most successful product of this particular vein of creativity, however, is what may be Shakespeare's last complete play, *The Tempest* (c. 1611), in which the resolution suggests the beneficial effects of the union of wisdom and power. In this play Prospero, deprived of his dukedom and banished to an island, confounds his usurping brother by

employing magical powers and furthering a love match between his own daughter and the son of one of his enemies. Shakespeare's poetic power reached great heights in this beautiful, lyrical play, and in Prospero's surrender of his magical powers at its conclusion, some critics—perhaps fancifully—have seen Shakespeare's own relinquishment of the theatre's "rough magic".

Two final plays, sometimes ascribed to Shakespeare, presumably are the products of collaboration. A historical drama, *Henry VIII* (c. 1613) was probably written with the English dramatist John Fletcher, as was *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (c. 1613; published posthumously, 1634), a story of the love of two noble friends for one woman.

### E. Literary Reputation

Shakespeare's reputation as perhaps the greatest of all dramatists was not achieved during his lifetime. Though his contemporary Ben Jonson declared him "not of an age, but for all time", early 17th-century taste found the plays of Jonson himself, or Thomas Middleton, or Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, equally worthy of praise. Only in the Restoration period—some 50 or more years after Shakespeare's death—did his reputation begin to eclipse that of his contemporaries. This is not to say that the late 17th- and early 18th-century theatre treated his plays with anything like reverence. When they were performed, it was most often in versions rewritten for the fashions of the age, purged—as their adaptors maintained—of their coarseness and absurdities. These alterations could be very significant: in one version of *King Lear* popular throughout the 18th century Lear and Cordelia are reprieved at the play's conclusion, transforming a tragedy into a tragicomedy! Perhaps paradoxically, it was exactly this fondness for adapting Shakespeare that kept his plays in the repertoire while those of Jonson, Middleton, and others went down to obscurity. Also, during the first half of the 18th century Shakespeare began to be afforded the role of English national poet, a process that reached its culmination in the installation of a memorial statue in Westminster Abbey in 1741 and a huge Jubilee festival, staged in 1764 to celebrate the bicentenary of his birth.

The Romantic movement, particularly the writings of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Johann Wolfgang Goethe, did much to shape both Shakespeare's international reputation and the account of his achievement that has persisted ever since. Romantic authors claimed Shakespeare as a great precursor of their own literary values: his work was celebrated as an embodiment of universal human truths, an unequalled articulation of the human condition in all its nobility and variety. In later Victorian Britain this view was married to the moralistic "civilizing" mission of educationalists and empire builders, while American writers looked to Shakespeare as a foundation stone of their own distinct cultural identity. The years since World War I have if anything cemented these positions: the establishment of institutions such as the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Britain, and the Folger Shakespeare Library in the United States, has ensured that his work has remained a central icon of Western culture. The claim that his plays have the power to transcend their historical moment and speak to all humanity now underlies an insistence on Shakespeare's continuing relevance to our own situation: as the title of a seminal book by Jan Kott put it, Shakespeare is "our contemporary".

Nevertheless, there have always been dissenters. Writers of the stature of Leo Tolstoy and George Bernard Shaw were prepared to offer devastatingly negative judgements on the plays and their author, while others have advanced eccentric theories designed to prove that such great plays could not have been written by someone of Shakespeare's obscure

origins and limited education. In their own way, recent Shakespearean scholars have also contributed to a demythologizing of the bard that some think threatens the security of his reputation. Yet even as the focus of such activities Shakespeare remains central to the work of literary critics, to theatre throughout the world, to Western accounts of national and cultural identity, and to the British tourist industry. These are not positions he will be allowed to surrender easily.

### Shakespeare's Plays

FIRST PERIOD	Early Plays
	<i>Henry VI Part I</i>
	<i>Henry VI Part II</i>
	<i>Henry VI Part III</i>
	<i>Richard III</i>
	<i>The Comedy of Errors</i>
	<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>
	<i>Titus Andronicus</i>
	<i>The Two Gentlemen of Verona</i>
	<i>Love's Labour's Lost</i>
SECOND PERIOD	Histories
	<i>Richard II</i>
	<i>King John</i>
	<i>Henry IV Part I</i>
	<i>Henry IV Part II</i>
	<i>Henry V</i>
	The 'Joyous' Comedies
	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>
	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>
	<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>
	<i>As You Like It</i>
	<i>The Merry Wives of Windsor</i>
	<i>Twelfth Night</i>
	Tragedies
	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>
	<i>Julius Caesar</i>
THIRD PERIOD	The Great Tragedies
	<i>Hamlet</i>
	<i>Othello</i>
	<i>King Lear</i>
	<i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>

	<i>Macbeth</i>
	<b>The 'Dark' Comedies</b>
	<i>All's Well That Ends Well</i>
	<i>Measure for Measure</i>
	<b>Tragedies</b>
	<i>Troilus and Cressida</i>
	<i>Timon of Athens</i>
	<i>Coriolanus</i>
<b>FOURTH PERIOD</b>	<b>Late Plays</b>
	<i>Pericles, Prince of Tyre</i>
	<i>Cymbeline</i>
	<i>The Winter's Tale</i>
	<i>The Tempest</i>
	<i>Henry VIII</i>
	<i>The Two Noble Kinsmen</i>

### Summary of Othello

*Othello* begins on a street in Venice, in the midst of an argument between Roderigo, a rich man, and Iago. Roderigo has been paying Iago to help him in his suit to Desdemona. But Roderigo has just learned that Desdemona has married Othello, a general whom Iago begrudgingly serves as ensign. Iago says he hates Othello, who recently passed him over for the position of lieutenant in favor of the inexperienced soldier Michael Cassio.

Unseen, Iago and Roderigo cry out to Brabantio that his daughter Desdemona has been stolen by and married to Othello, the Moor. Brabantio finds that his daughter is indeed missing, and he gathers some officers to find Othello. Not wanting his hatred of Othello to be known, Iago leaves Roderigo and hurries back to Othello before Brabantio sees him. At Othello's lodgings, Cassio arrives with an urgent message from the duke: Othello's help is needed in the matter of the imminent Turkish invasion of Cyprus. Not long afterward, Brabantio arrives with Roderigo and others, and accuses Othello of stealing his daughter by witchcraft. When he finds out that Othello is on his way to speak with the duke, Brabantio decides to go along and accuse Othello before the assembled senate.

Brabantio's plan backfires. The duke and senate are very sympathetic toward Othello. Given a chance to speak for himself, Othello explains that he wooed and won Desdemona not by witchcraft but with the stories of his adventures in travel and war. The duke finds Othello's explanation convincing, and Desdemona herself enters at this point to defend her choice in marriage and to announce to her father that her allegiance is now to her husband. Brabantio is frustrated, but acquiesces and allows the senate meeting to resume. The duke says that Othello must go to Cyprus to aid in the defense against the Turks, who are headed for the island. Desdemona insists that she accompany her husband on his trip, and preparations are made for them to depart that night.

In Cyprus the following day, two gentlemen stand on the shore with Montano, the governor of Cyprus. A third gentleman arrives and reports that the Turkish fleet has been wrecked in



a storm at sea. Cassio, whose ship did not suffer the same fate, arrives soon after, followed by a second ship carrying Iago, Roderigo, Desdemona, and Emilia, Iago's wife. Once they have landed, Othello's ship is sighted, and the group goes to the harbor. As they wait for Othello, Cassio greets Desdemona by clasping her hand. Watching them, Iago tells the audience that he will use "as little a web as this" hand-holding to ensnare Cassio (II.i.169).

Othello arrives, greets his wife, and announces that there will be reveling that evening to celebrate Cyprus's safety from the Turks. Once everyone has left, Roderigo complains to Iago that he has no chance of breaking up Othello's marriage. Iago assures Roderigo that as soon as Desdemona's "blood is made dull with the act of sport," she will lose interest in Othello and seek sexual satisfaction elsewhere (II.i.222). However, Iago warns that "elsewhere" will likely be with Cassio. Iago counsels Roderigo that he should cast Cassio into disgrace by starting a fight with Cassio at the evening's revels. In a soliloquy, Iago explains to the audience that eliminating Cassio is the first crucial step in his plan to ruin Othello. That night, Iago gets Cassio drunk and then sends Roderigo to start a fight with him. Apparently provoked by Roderigo, Cassio chases Roderigo across the stage. Governor Montano attempts to hold Cassio down, and Cassio stabs him. Iago sends Roderigo to raise alarm in the town.

The alarm is rung, and Othello, who had left earlier with plans to consummate his marriage, soon arrives to still the commotion. When Othello demands to know who began the fight, Iago feigns reluctance to implicate his "friend" Cassio, but he ultimately tells the whole story. Othello then strips Cassio of his rank of lieutenant. Cassio is extremely upset, and he laments to Iago, once everyone else has gone, that his reputation has been ruined forever. Iago assures Cassio that he can get back into Othello's good graces by using Desdemona as an intermediary. In a soliloquy, Iago tells us that he will frame Cassio and Desdemona as lovers to make Othello jealous.

In an attempt at reconciliation, Cassio sends some musicians to play beneath Othello's window. Othello, however, sends his clown to tell the musicians to go away. Hoping to arrange a meeting with Desdemona, Cassio asks the clown, a peasant who serves Othello, to send Emilia to him. After the clown departs, Iago passes by and tells Cassio that he will get Othello out of the way so that Cassio can speak privately with Desdemona. Othello, Iago, and a gentleman go to examine some of the town's fortifications.

Desdemona is quite sympathetic to Cassio's request and promises that she will do everything she can to make Othello forgive his former lieutenant. As Cassio is about to leave, Othello and Iago return. Feeling uneasy, Cassio leaves without talking to Othello. Othello inquires whether it was Cassio who just parted from his wife, and Iago, beginning to kindle Othello's fire of jealousy, replies, "No, sure, I cannot think it, / That he would steal away so guilty-like, / Seeing your coming" (III.iii.37-39).

Othello becomes upset and moody, and Iago furthers his goal of removing both Cassio and Desdemona by suggesting that Cassio and Desdemona are involved in an affair. Desdemona's entreaties to Othello to reinstate Cassio as lieutenant add to Othello's almost immediate conviction that his wife is unfaithful. After Othello's conversation with Iago, Desdemona comes to call Othello to supper and finds him feeling unwell. She offers him her handkerchief to wrap around his head, but he finds it to be "[t]oo little" and lets it drop to the floor (III.iii.291). Desdemona and Othello go to dinner, and Emilia picks up the handkerchief, mentioning to the audience that Iago has always wanted her to steal it for him.



Iago is ecstatic when Emilia gives him the handkerchief, which he plants in Cassio's room as "evidence" of his affair with Desdemona. When Othello demands "ocular proof" (III.iii.365) that his wife is unfaithful, Iago says that he has seen Cassio "wipe his beard" (III.iii.444) with Desdemona's handkerchief—the first gift Othello ever gave her. Othello vows to take vengeance on his wife and on Cassio, and Iago vows that he will help him. When Othello sees Desdemona later that evening, he demands the handkerchief of her, but she tells him that she does not have it with her and attempts to change the subject by continuing her suit on Cassio's behalf. This drives Othello into a further rage, and he storms out. Later, Cassio comes onstage, wondering about the handkerchief he has just found in his chamber. He is greeted by Bianca, a prostitute, whom he asks to take the handkerchief and copy its embroidery for him.

Through Iago's machinations, Othello becomes so consumed by jealousy that he falls into a trance and has a fit of epilepsy. As he writhes on the ground, Cassio comes by, and Iago tells him to come back in a few minutes to talk. Once Othello recovers, Iago tells him of the meeting he has planned with Cassio. He instructs Othello to hide nearby and watch as Iago extracts from Cassio the story of his affair with Desdemona. While Othello stands out of earshot, Iago pumps Cassio for information about Bianca, causing Cassio to laugh and confirm Othello's suspicions. Bianca herself then enters with Desdemona's handkerchief, reprimanding Cassio for making her copy out the embroidery of a love token given to him by another woman. When Desdemona enters with Lodovico and Lodovico subsequently gives Othello a letter from Venice calling him home and instating Cassio as his replacement, Othello goes over the edge, striking Desdemona and then storming out.

That night, Othello accuses Desdemona of being a whore. He ignores her protestations, seconded by Emilia, that she is innocent. Iago assures Desdemona that Othello is simply upset about matters of state. Later that night, however, Othello ominously tells Desdemona to wait for him in bed and to send Emilia away. Meanwhile, Iago assures the still-complaining Roderigo that everything is going as planned: in order to prevent Desdemona and Othello from leaving, Roderigo must kill Cassio. Then he will have a clear avenue to his love.

Iago instructs Roderigo to ambush Cassio, but Roderigo misses his mark and Cassio wounds him instead. Iago wounds Cassio and runs away. When Othello hears Cassio's cry, he assumes that Iago has killed Cassio as he said he would. Lodovico and Graziano enter to see what the commotion is about. Iago enters shortly thereafter and flies into a pretend rage as he "discovers" Cassio's assailant Roderigo, whom he murders. Cassio is taken to have his wound dressed.

Meanwhile, Othello stands over his sleeping wife in their bedchamber, preparing to kill her. Desdemona wakes and attempts to plead with Othello. She asserts her innocence, but Othello smothers her. Emilia enters with the news that Roderigo is dead. Othello asks if Cassio is dead too and is mortified when Emilia says he is not. After crying out that she has been murdered, Desdemona changes her story before she dies, claiming that she has committed suicide. Emilia asks Othello what happened, and Othello tells her that he has killed Desdemona for her infidelity, which Iago brought to his attention.

Montano, Graziano, and Iago come into the room. Iago attempts to silence Emilia, who realizes what Iago has done. At first, Othello insists that Iago has told the truth, citing the handkerchief as evidence. Once Emilia tells him how she found the handkerchief and gave it to Iago, Othello is crushed and begins to weep. He tries to kill Iago but is disarmed. Iago kills

Emilia and flees, but he is caught by Lodovico and Montano, who return holding Iago captive. They also bring Cassio, who is now in a chair because of his wound. Othello wounds Iago and is disarmed. Lodovico tells Othello that he must come with them back to Venice to be tried. Othello makes a speech about how he would like to be remembered, then kills himself with a sword he had hidden on his person. The play closes with a speech by Lodovico. He gives Othello's house and goods to Graziano and orders that Iago be executed.

### **Character List**

**Othello** - The play's protagonist and hero. A Christian Moor and general of the armies of Venice, Othello is an eloquent and physically powerful figure, respected by all those around him. In spite of his elevated status, he is nevertheless easy prey to insecurities because of his age, his life as a soldier, and his race. He possesses a "free and open nature," which his ensign Iago uses to twist his love for his wife, Desdemona, into a powerful and destructive jealousy (I.iii.381).

**Desdemona** - The daughter of the Venetian senator Brabantio. Desdemona and Othello are secretly married before the play begins. While in many ways stereotypically pure and meek, Desdemona is also determined and self-possessed. She is equally capable of defending her marriage, jesting bawdily with Iago, and responding with dignity to Othello's incomprehensible jealousy.

**Iago** - Othello's ensign (a job also known as an ancient or standard-bearer), and the villain of the play. Iago is twenty-eight years old. While his ostensible reason for desiring Othello's demise is that he has been passed over for promotion to lieutenant, Iago's motivations are never very clearly expressed and seem to originate in an obsessive, almost aesthetic delight in manipulation and destruction.

**Michael Cassio** - Othello's lieutenant. Cassio is a young and inexperienced soldier, whose high position is much resented by Iago. Truly devoted to Othello, Cassio is extremely ashamed after being implicated in a drunken brawl on Cyprus and losing his place as lieutenant. Iago uses Cassio's youth, good looks, and friendship with Desdemona to play on Othello's insecurities about Desdemona's fidelity.

**Emilia** - Iago's wife and Desdemona's attendant. A cynical, worldly woman, she is deeply attached to her mistress and distrustful of her husband.

**Roderigo** - A jealous suitor of Desdemona. Young, rich, and foolish, Roderigo is convinced that if he gives Iago all of his money, Iago will help him win Desdemona's hand. Repeatedly frustrated as Othello marries Desdemona and then takes her to Cyprus, Roderigo is ultimately desperate enough to agree to help Iago kill Cassio after Iago points out that Cassio is another potential rival for Desdemona.

**Bianca** - A courtesan, or prostitute, in Cyprus. Bianca's favorite customer is Cassio, who teases her with promises of marriage.

**Brabantio** - Desdemona's father, a somewhat blustering and self-important Venetian senator. As a friend of Othello, Brabantio feels betrayed when the general marries his daughter in secret.

**Duke of Venice** - The official authority in Venice, the duke has great respect for Othello as a public and military servant. His primary role within the play is to reconcile Othello and Brabantio in Act I, scene iii, and then to send Othello to Cyprus.

**Montano** - The governor of Cyprus before Othello. We see him first in Act II, as he recounts the status of the war and awaits the Venetian ships.

**Lodovico** - One of Brabantio's kinsmen, Lodovico acts as a messenger from Venice to Cyprus. He arrives in Cyprus in Act IV with letters announcing that Othello has been replaced by Cassio as governor.

**Graziano** - Brabantio's kinsman who accompanies Lodovico to Cyprus. Amidst the chaos of the final scene, Graziano mentions that Desdemona's father has died.

**Clown** - Othello's servant. Although the clown appears only in two short scenes, his appearances reflect and distort the action and words of the main plots: his puns on the word "lie" in Act III, scene iv, for example, anticipate Othello's confusion of two meanings of that word in Act IV, scene i.

### Analysis of Major Characters

#### **Othello**

Beginning with the opening lines of the play, Othello remains at a distance from much of the action that concerns and affects him. Roderigo and Iago refer ambiguously to a "he" or "him" for much of the first scene. When they begin to specify whom they are talking about, especially once they stand beneath Brabantio's window, they do so with racial epithets, not names. These include "the Moor" (I.i.57), "the thick-lips" (I.i.66), "an old black ram" (I.i.88), and "a Barbary horse" (I.i.113). Although Othello appears at the beginning of the second scene, we do not hear his name until well into Act I, scene iii (I.iii.48). Later, Othello's will be the last of the three ships to arrive at Cyprus in Act II, scene i; Othello will stand apart while Cassio and Iago supposedly discuss Desdemona in Act IV, scene i; and Othello will assume that Cassio is dead without being present when the fight takes place in Act V, scene i. Othello's status as an outsider may be the reason he is such easy prey for Iago.

Although Othello is a cultural and racial outsider in Venice, his skill as a soldier and leader is nevertheless valuable and necessary to the state, and he is an integral part of Venetian civic society. He is in great demand by the duke and senate, as evidenced by Cassio's comment that the senate "sent about three several quests" to look for Othello (I.ii.46). The Venetian government trusts Othello enough to put him in full martial and political command of Cyprus; indeed, in his dying speech, Othello reminds the Venetians of the "service" he has done their state (V.ii.348).

Those who consider Othello their social and civic peer, such as Desdemona and Brabantio, nevertheless seem drawn to him because of his exotic qualities. Othello admits as much when he tells the duke about his friendship with Brabantio. He says, -"[Desdemona's] father loved me, oft invited me, / Still questioned me the story of my life / From year to year" (I.iii.127-129). -Othello is also able to captivate his peers with his speech. The duke's reply to Othello's speech about how he wooed Desdemona with his tales of adventure is: "I think this tale would win my daughter too" (I.iii.170).

Othello sometimes makes a point of presenting himself as an outsider, whether because he recognizes his exotic appeal or because he is self-conscious of and defensive about his difference from other Venetians. For example, in spite of his obvious eloquence in Act I, scene iii, he protests, "Rude am I in my speech, / And little blessed with the soft phrase of peace" (I.iii.81-82). While Othello is never rude in his speech, he does allow his eloquence to suffer as he is put under increasing strain by Iago's plots. In the final moments of the

play, Othello regains his composure and, once again, seduces both his onstage and offstage audiences with his words. The speech that precedes his suicide is a tale that could woo almost anyone. It is the tension between Othello's victimization at the hands of a foreign culture and his own willingness to torment himself that makes him a tragic figure rather than simply Iago's ridiculous puppet.

### **Iago**

Possibly the most heinous villain in Shakespeare, Iago is fascinating for his most terrible characteristic: his utter lack of convincing motivation for his actions. In the first scene, he claims to be angry at Othello for having passed him over for the position of lieutenant (I.i. 7–32). At the end of Act I, scene iii, Iago says he thinks Othello may have slept with his wife, Emilia: "It is thought abroad that 'twixt my sheets / He has done my office" (I.iii.369–370). Iago mentions this suspicion again at the end of Act II, scene i, explaining that he lusts after Desdemona because he wants to get even with Othello "wife for wife" (II.i.286). None of these claims seems to adequately explain Iago's deep hatred of Othello, and Iago's lack of motivation—or his inability or unwillingness to express his true motivation—makes his actions all the more terrifying. He is willing to take revenge on anyone—Othello, Desdemona, Cassio, Roderigo, even Emilia—at the slightest provocation and enjoys the pain and damage he causes.

Iago is often funny, especially in his scenes with the foolish Roderigo, which serve as a showcase of Iago's manipulative abilities. He seems almost to wink at the audience as he revels in his own skill. As entertained spectators, we find ourselves on Iago's side when he is with Roderigo, but the interactions between the two also reveal a streak of cowardice in Iago—a cowardice that becomes manifest in the final scene, when Iago kills his own wife (V.ii.231–242).

Iago's murder of Emilia could also stem from the general hatred of women that he displays. Some readers have suggested that Iago's true, underlying motive for persecuting Othello is his homosexual love for the general. He certainly seems to take great pleasure in preventing Othello from enjoying marital happiness, and he expresses his love for Othello frequently and effusively.

It is Iago's talent for understanding and manipulating the desires of those around him that makes him both a powerful and a compelling figure. Iago is able to take the handkerchief from Emilia and know that he can deflect her questions; he is able to tell Othello of the handkerchief and know that Othello will not doubt him; he is able to tell the audience, "And what's he then that says I play the villain," and know that it will laugh as though he were a clown (II.iii.310). Though the most inveterate liar, Iago inspires all of the play's characters the trait that is most lethal to Othello: trust.

### **Desdemona**

Desdemona is a more plausible, well-rounded figure than much criticism has given her credit for. Arguments that see Desdemona as stereotypically weak and submissive ignore the conviction and authority of her first speech ("My noble father, / I do perceive here a divided duty" [I.iii.179–180]) and her terse fury after Othello strikes her ("I have not deserved this" [IV.i.236]). Similarly, critics who argue that Desdemona's slightly bizarre bawdy jesting with Iago in Act II, scene i, is either an interpolation not written by Shakespeare or a mere vulgarity ignore the fact that Desdemona is young, sexual, and



recently married. She later displays the same chiding, almost mischievous wit in Act III, scene iii, lines 61–84, when she attempts to persuade Othello to forgive Cassio.

Desdemona is at times a submissive character, most notably in her willingness to take credit for her own murder. In response to Emilia's question, "O, who hath done this deed?" Desdemona's final words are, "Nobody, I myself. Farewell. / Commend me to my kind lord. O, farewell" (V.ii.133–134). The play, then, depicts Desdemona contradictorily as a self-effacing, faithful wife and as a bold, independent personality. This contradiction may be intentional, meant to portray the way Desdemona herself feels after defending her choice of marriage to her father in Act I, scene iii, and then almost immediately being put in the position of defending her fidelity to her husband. She begins the play as a supremely independent person, but midway through she must struggle against all odds to convince Othello that she is not *too* independent. The manner in which Desdemona is murdered—smothered by a pillow in a bed covered in her wedding sheets—is symbolic: she is literally suffocated beneath the demands put on her fidelity. Since her first lines, Desdemona has seemed capable of meeting or even rising above those demands. In the end, Othello stifles the speech that made Desdemona so powerful.

Tragically, Desdemona is apparently aware of her imminent death. She, not Othello, asks Emilia to put her wedding sheets on the bed, and she asks Emilia to bury her in these sheets should she die first. The last time we see Desdemona before she awakens to find Othello standing over her with murder in his eyes, she sings a song she learned from her mother's maid: "She was in love; and he proved mad / And did forsake her. She had a song of willow. / . . . / And she died singing it. That song tonight / Will not go from my mind" (IV.iii.27–30). Like the audience, Desdemona seems able only to watch as her husband is driven insane with jealousy. Though she maintains to the end that she is "guiltless," Desdemona also forgives her husband (V.ii.133). Her forgiveness of Othello may help the audience to forgive him as well.

### Themes

#### **The Incompatibility of Military Heroism & Love**

Before and above all else, Othello is a soldier. From the earliest moments in the play, his career affects his married life. Asking "fit disposition" for his wife after being ordered to Cyprus (I.iii.234), Othello notes that "the tyrant custom . . . / Hath made the flinty and steel couch of war / My thrice-driven bed of down" (I.iii.227–229). While Desdemona is used to better "accommodation," she nevertheless accompanies her husband to Cyprus (I.iii.236). Moreover, she is unperturbed by the tempest or Turks that threatened their crossing, and genuinely curious rather than irate when she is roused from bed by the drunken brawl in Act II, scene iii. She is, indeed, Othello's "fair warrior," and he is happiest when he has her by his side in the midst of military conflict or business (II.i.179). The military also provides Othello with a means to gain acceptance in Venetian society. While the Venetians in the play are generally fearful of the prospect of Othello's social entrance into white society through his marriage to Desdemona, all Venetians respect and honor him as a soldier. Mercenary Moors were, in fact, commonplace at the time.

Othello predicates his success in love on his success as a soldier, wooing Desdemona with tales of his military travels and battles. Once the Turks are drowned—by natural rather than military might—Othello is left without anything to do: the last act of military administration we see him perform is the viewing of fortifications in the extremely short

second scene of Act III. No longer having a means of proving his manhood or honor in a public setting such as the court or the battlefield, Othello begins to feel uneasy with his footing in a private setting, the bedroom. Iago capitalizes on this uneasiness, calling Othello's epileptic fit in Act IV, scene i, "[a] passion most unsuited such a man." In other words, Iago is calling Othello unsoldierly. Iago also takes care to mention that Cassio, whom Othello believes to be his competitor, saw him in his emasculating trance (IV.i.75).

Desperate to cling to the security of his former identity as a soldier while his current identity as a lover crumbles, Othello begins to confuse the one with the other. His expression of his jealousy quickly devolves from the conventional—"Farewell the tranquil mind"—to the absurd:

*Farewell the plum'd troops and the big wars  
That make ambition virtue! O, farewell,  
Farewell the neighing steed and the shrill trump,  
The spirit-stirring drum, th'ear piercing fife,  
The royal banner, and all quality,  
Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war!"*

(III.iii.353–359)

One might well say that Othello is saying farewell to the wrong things—he is entirely preoccupied with his identity as a soldier. But his way of thinking is somewhat justified by its seductiveness to the audience as well. Critics and audiences alike find comfort and nobility in Othello's final speech and the anecdote of the "malignant and . . . turbaned Turk" (V.ii.362), even though in that speech, as in his speech in Act III, scene iii, Othello depends on his identity as a soldier to glorify himself in the public's memory, and to try to make his audience forget his and Desdemona's disastrous marital experiment.

### **The Danger of Isolation**

The action of *Othello* moves from the metropolis of Venice to the island of Cyprus. Protected by military fortifications as well as by the forces of nature, Cyprus faces little threat from external forces. Once Othello, Iago, Desdemona, Emilia, and Roderigo have come to Cyprus, they have nothing to do but prey upon one another. Isolation enables many of the play's most important effects: Iago frequently speaks in soliloquies; Othello stands apart while Iago talks with Cassio in Act IV, scene i, and is left alone onstage with the bodies of Emilia and Desdemona for a few moments in Act V, scene ii; Roderigo seems attached to no one in the play except Iago. And, most prominently, Othello is visibly isolated from the other characters by his physical stature and the color of his skin. Iago is an expert at manipulating the distance between characters, isolating his victims so that they fall prey to their own obsessions. At the same time, Iago, of necessity always standing apart, falls prey to his own obsession with revenge. The characters *cannot* be islands, the play seems to say: self-isolation as an act of self-preservation leads ultimately to self-destruction. Such self-isolation leads to the deaths of Roderigo, Iago, Othello, and even Emilia.

### **Motifs**

#### **Sight and Blindness**

When Desdemona asks to be allowed to accompany Othello to Cyprus, she says that she "saw Othello's visage in his mind, / And to his honours and his valiant parts / Did I my soul and fortunes consecrate" (I.iii. 250–252). Othello's blackness, his visible difference from everyone around him, is of little importance to Desdemona: she has the power to see him



for what he is in a way that even Othello himself cannot. Desdemona's line is one of many references to different kinds of sight in the play. Earlier in Act I, scene iii, a senator suggests that the Turkish retreat to Rhodes is "a pageant / To keep us in false gaze" (I.iii.19–20). The beginning of Act II consists entirely of people staring out to sea, waiting to see the arrival of ships, friendly or otherwise. Othello, though he demands "ocular proof" (III.iii.365), is frequently convinced by things he does not see: he strips Cassio of his position as lieutenant based on the story Iago tells; he relies on Iago's story of seeing Cassio wipe his beard with Desdemona's handkerchief (III.iii.437–440); and he believes Cassio to be dead simply because he hears him scream. After Othello has killed himself in the final scene, Lodovico says to Iago, "Look on the tragic loading of this bed. / This is thy work. The object poisons sight. / Let it be hid" (V.ii.373–375). The action of the play depends heavily on characters *not* seeing things: Othello accuses his wife although he never sees her infidelity, and Emilia, although she watches Othello erupt into a rage about the missing handkerchief, does not figuratively "see" what her husband has done.

### Plants

Iago is strangely preoccupied with plants. His speeches to Roderigo in particular make extensive and elaborate use of vegetable metaphors and conceits. Some examples are: "Our bodies are our gardens, to which our wills are gardeners; so that if we will plant nettles or sow lettuce, set hyssop and weed up thyme . . . the power and corrigible authority of this lies in our wills" (I.iii.317–322); "Though other things grow fair against the sun, / Yet fruits that blossom first will first be ripe" (II.iii.349–350); "And then, sir, would he gripe and wring my hand, / Cry 'O sweet creature!', then kiss me hard, / As if he plucked kisses up by the roots, / That grew upon my lips" (III.iii.425–428). The first of these examples best explains Iago's preoccupation with the plant metaphor and how it functions within the play. Characters in this play seem to be the product of certain inevitable, natural forces, which, if left unchecked, will grow wild. Iago understands these natural forces particularly well: he is, according to his own metaphor, a good "gardener," both of himself and of others.

Many of Iago's botanical references concern poison: "I'll pour this pestilence into his ear" (II.iii.330); "The Moor already changes with my poison. / Dangerous conceits are in their natures poisons, / . . . / . . . Not poppy nor mandragora / Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world / Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep" (III.iii.329–336). Iago cultivates his "conceits" so that they become lethal poisons and then plants their seeds in the minds of others. The organic way in which Iago's plots consume the other characters and determine their behavior makes his conniving, human evil seem like a force of nature. That organic growth also indicates that the minds of the other characters are fertile ground for Iago's efforts.

### Animals

Iago calls Othello a "Barbary horse," an "old black ram," and also tells Brabantio that his daughter and Othello are "making the beast with two backs" (I.i.117–118). In Act I, scene iii, Iago tells Roderigo, "Ere I would say I would drown myself for the love of a guinea-hen, I would change my humanity with a baboon" (I.iii.312–313). He then remarks that drowning is for "cats and blind puppies" (I.iii.330–331). Cassio laments that, when drunk, he is "by and by a fool, and presently a beast!" (II.iii.284–285). Othello tells Iago, "Exchange me for a goat / When I shall turn the business of my soul / To such exsufflicate and blowed surmises" (III.iii.184–186). He later says that "[a] horned man's a monster and a beast" (IV.i.59). Even Emilia, in the final scene, says that she will "play the swan, / And die in

music" (V.ii.254–255). Like the repeated references to plants, these references to animals convey a sense that the laws of nature, rather than those of society, are the primary forces governing the characters in this play. When animal references are used with regard to Othello, as they frequently are, they reflect the racism both of characters in the play and of Shakespeare's contemporary audience. "Barbary horse" is a vulgarity particularly appropriate in the mouth of Iago, but even without having seen Othello, the Jacobean audience would have known from Iago's metaphor that he meant to connote a savage Moor.

### **Hell, Demons, and Monsters**

Iago tells Othello to beware of jealousy, the "green-eyed monster which doth mock/ The meat it feeds on" (III.iii.170–171). Likewise, Emilia describes jealousy as dangerously and uncannily self-generating, a "monster / Begot upon itself, born on itself" (III.iv.156–157). Imagery of hell and damnation also recurs throughout Othello, especially toward the end of the play, when Othello becomes preoccupied with the religious and moral judgment of Desdemona and himself. After he has learned the truth about Iago, Othello calls Iago a devil and a demon several times in Act V, scene ii. Othello's earlier allusion to "some monster in [his] thought" ironically refers to Iago (III.iii.111). Likewise, his vision of Desdemona's betrayal is "monstrous, monstrous!" (III.iii.431). Shortly before he kills himself, Othello wishes for eternal spiritual and physical torture in hell, crying out, "Whip me, ye devils, / . . . / . . . roast me in sulphur, / Wash me in steep-down gulfs of liquid fire!" (V.ii.284–287). The imagery of the monstrous and diabolical takes over where the imagery of animals can go no further, presenting the jealousy-crazed characters not simply as brutish, but as grotesque, deformed, and demonic.

### **Symbols**

#### **The Handkerchief**

The handkerchief symbolizes different things to different characters. Since the handkerchief was the first gift Desdemona received from Othello, she keeps it about her constantly as a symbol of Othello's love. Iago manipulates the handkerchief so that Othello comes to see it as a symbol of Desdemona herself—her faith and chastity. By taking possession of it, he is able to convert it into evidence of her infidelity. But the handkerchief's importance to Iago and Desdemona derives from its importance to Othello himself. He tells Desdemona that it was woven by a 200-year-old sibyl, or female prophet, using silk from sacred worms and dye extracted from the hearts of mummified virgins. Othello claims that his mother used it to keep his father faithful to her, so, to him, the handkerchief represents marital fidelity. The pattern of strawberries (dyed with virgins' blood) on a white background strongly suggests the bloodstains left on the sheets on a virgin's wedding night, so the handkerchief implicitly suggests a guarantee of virginity as well as fidelity.

#### **The Song "Willow"**

As she prepares for bed in Act V, Desdemona sings a song about a woman who is betrayed by her lover. She was taught the song by her mother's maid, Barbary, who suffered a misfortune similar to that of the woman in the song; she even died singing "Willow." The song's lyrics suggest that both men and women are unfaithful to one another. To Desdemona, the song seems to represent a melancholy and resigned acceptance of her alienation from Othello's affections, and singing it leads her to question Emilia about the nature and practice of infidelity.

### **Key Facts**

**FULL TITLE** · *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice*

**AUTHOR** · William Shakespeare

**TYPE OF WORK** · Play

**GENRE** · Tragedy

**LANGUAGE** · English

**TIME AND PLACE WRITTEN** · Between 1601 and 1604, England

**DATE OF FIRST PUBLICATION** · 1622

**PUBLISHER** · Thomas Walkley

**TONE** · Shakespeare clearly views the events of the play as tragic. He seems to view the marriage between Desdemona and Othello as noble and heroic, for the most part.

**SETTING (TIME)** · Late sixteenth century, during the wars between Venice and Turkey

**SETTING (PLACE)** · Venice in Act I; the island of Cyprus thereafter

**PROTAGONIST** · Othello

**MAJOR CONFLICT** · Othello and Desdemona marry and attempt to build a life together, despite their differences in age, race, and experience. Their marriage is sabotaged by the envious Iago, who convinces Othello that Desdemona is unfaithful.

**RISING ACTION** · Iago tells the audience of his scheme, arranges for Cassio to lose his position as lieutenant, and gradually insinuates to Othello that Desdemona is unfaithful.

**CLIMAX** · The climax occurs at the end of Act III, scene iii, when Othello kneels with Iago and vows not to change course until he has achieved bloody revenge.

**FALLING ACTION** · Iago plants the handkerchief in Cassio's room and later arranges a conversation with Cassio, which Othello watches and sees as "proof" that Cassio and Desdemona have slept together. Iago unsuccessfully attempts to kill Cassio, and Othello smothers Desdemona with a pillow. Emilia exposes Iago's deceptions, Othello kills himself, and Iago is taken away to be tortured.

**THEMES** · The incompatibility of military heroism and love; the danger of isolation

**MOTIFS** · Sight and blindness; plants; animals; hell, demons, and monsters

**SYMBOLS** · The handkerchief; the song "Willow"

**FORESHADOWING** · Othello and Desdemona's speeches about love foreshadow the disaster to come; Othello's description of his past and of his wooing of Desdemona foreshadow his suicide speech; Desdemona's "Willow" song and remarks to Emilia in Act IV, scene iii, foreshadow her death.

### **Essay Questions:**

**1. Write an essay on *Othello* as a Shakespearean tragedy.**

**(or)**

**Discuss Shakespeare's conception of tragedy with reference to *Othello*.**

Shakespeare's great skill in representing the tragic aspect of life is best shown in his principal tragedies: *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello* and *King Lear*. They are typical Shakespearean tragedies. They represent a certain aspect of human life in a certain way. Such a representation is Shakespeare's conception of tragedy.

Shakespeare's tragedies have all the fundamental traits of tragedy as defined by Aristotle in his *Poetics*. However, Shakespeare's conception of tragedy differs from Aristotle's in some respects:

- (i) It does not observe the unities of time and place, as laid down by Aristotle.
- (ii) It gives an important role to women whereas Aristotle denies it to women.
- (iii) It insists on the death of the hero at the end of the play whereas Aristotle regards tragedy as a serious rendering of life in contrast to comedy: Bradley remarks: "*No play at the end of which the hero remains alive, is, in the full Shakespearean sense, a tragedy.*"

A Shakespearean tragedy is concerned with only one character, that is the hero. Its theme is the career of the hero. The hero of a Shakespearean tragedy is not an ordinary mortal. He occupies enviable position in society. He commands the respect of one and all. Hamlet is the prince of Denmark. King Lear is the king of Britain. Macbeth is at first commander and later a king. Othello is the commander of the Venetian army. But in every one of these heroes there is a tragic flaw which brings about his ruin. Charlton refers to it as "*moral ulcer*". Indecision is the tragic trait of Hamlet! Ambition is the tragic flaw of Macbeth. Pride is the tragic flaw of Lear. Jealousy is the tragic flaw of Othello. These tragic heroes are punished by their own self-willed wrong actions.

There is a fundamental difference between a Shakespearean tragedy and a medieval tragedy. In the latter, men are represented as helpless toys in the hands of Fortune or Fate. But in Shakespeare's tragedies, the heroes indulge in wrong actions and consequently suffer.- The wrong actions of the heroes create the catastrophe and so it has been rightly remarked that with Shakespeare, "*Character is destiny.*"

Shakespeare allows to 'chance' or 'accident' an appreciable influence at some point in the action. The accidental dropping of the handkerchief by Desdemona at the most fatal moment costs her life. The accidental attack of the pirate ship on Hamlet's ship enables him to return to Denmark. The operation of accident is a prominent fact of human life. Shakespeare makes use of it very sparingly.

The action of a Shakespearean tragedy develops through conflict. This conflict is of two kinds : (i) *external conflict* and (ii) *internal conflict*. The former takes place between two persons or groups of persons representing different interests or points of view. The latter takes place in the mind of the hero and is more important than the former. In *Othello*, there is external conflict between the hero, the heroine and their supporters on one side and Brabantio and his supporters on the other side. It subsides after Othello and Desdemona go to Cyprus. The internal conflict in the mind of Othello begins when he suspects the chastity of his wife. It is as much a conflict between love and jealousy as between love and honour. It causes a lot of suffering to the hero. It makes *Othello* the most painfully exciting and the most terrible of all Shakespearean tragedies.)

Poetic justice is conspicuous by its absence in Shakespeare's tragedies. In every tragedy of Shakespeare there is waste of good. Not only the hero dies but many other characters die at the end of the tragedy. The last scene of *Hamlet* closes with four dead bodies on the stage. The last scene of *Othello* also closes with three dead bodies on the stage. The tragedies of Shakespeare have an uplifting effect on the emotions of the audience.

To sum up, *Othello* is one of the principal tragedies of Shakespeare. It has been rightly described as a “domestic tragedy” since the (centre of interest throughout it is the home - father and daughter, husband and wife and friend and friend. There are many touches which add to the domestic atmosphere. Othello’s asking Desdemona for a handkerchief, Desdemona’s words to Emilia, “Unpin me” and references to sheets-, night gown, fans, gloves, suppers and dinners are some examples. Othello’s strangling of Desdemona in her bed and his falling and dying on the same bed richly contribute to the domestic atmosphere of *Othello*.

**2. Write an essay on Shakespeare’s conception of the tragic hero with reference to Othello.**

**(or)**

**Write an essay on Othello as a tragic hero of Shakespeare.**

*Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello* and *King Lear* are typical tragedies of Shakespeare. The heroes of these plays are typical tragic heroes of Shakespeare. They dwarf all the other characters in the play. Hence Shakespeare has significantly named these plays after the heroes.

Shakespeare’s concept of the tragic hero is in accord with Aristotle’s. According to Aristotle, the death of a lame beggar or a villain or a virtuous and innocent man cannot be the subject of a tragedy. The tragic hero must occupy a high position in life. There must be something great in him. At the same time there must be some weakness in his character, which leads to his fall. Shakespeare also holds the same conception of the tragic hero. But while in the ancient tragedies, the heroes are puppets in the hands of Fate, the tragic heroes of Shakespeare are not so. Their character is their destiny. Their wrong actions lead to their ruin. Thus in Shakespeare, character is destiny.

Shakespeare’s tragic heroes occupy great positions in life. They have great qualities of head and heart. Hamlet is the prince of Denmark. Macbeth is a great soldier. Lear is every inch a king. He has royalty in his very look. Othello is the great commander of the Venetian army. No other general of Venice is comparable to him. He is not born in familiar England, but he comes from remote Morocco. He has lived a life of adventure and romance. There is a sense of mystery about him. Hence his life is bound to be interesting. Bradley says, “*Othello* is by far the most romantic figure among Shakespeare’s heroes.”

In the character of every hero of Shakespeare, there is a trait which leads to his ruin. In Macbeth it is ambition. In King Lear it is his rash humour. In Othello it is his jealousy. This tragic flaw makes the hero commit certain wrong actions which ultimately ruin him. The fortunes of these tragic heroes are moulded by their character and by certain other agencies such as the accident of the dropping of the handkerchief by Desdemona just when Iago is in need of it.

In Shakespeare’s tragedies in addition to external conflict there is ‘the internal conflict also. It takes place in the mind of the hero. The tragic hero is at war not only with his enemies but also with himself. There is a fierce clash of feelings in Othello’s mind. He suffers the tortures of jealousy in love. Nor poppy nor mandragora nor any other syrup can give him sweet sleep. It is this clash between the nobler and the baser elements in the hero’s character that makes him very interesting. It is in representing



the conflict in the hero's mind that Shakespeare has made the profoundest studies in human psychology.

In his conception of the tragic hero Shakespeare represents life as unhappily as it is in this world. All the noble qualities of the tragic hero come to naught because of the single tragic flaw in him. This tragic flaw leads not only to the death of the hero but to that of many other characters. Thus at the close of *Hamlet* we see four dead bodies on the stage. The close of *Othello* is marked by the death of Othello, Desdemona and Emilia.

**3. Sketch the character of Othello.**

**(or)**

**"I saw Othello's face in his mind." Elucidate**

**(or)**

**"One not easily jealous, but being wrought and perplexed in the extreme." Discuss this with reference to Othello's character.**

Othello is unique among the heroes of Shakespeare. It is generally supposed that he was a black Negro. In Shakespeare "black" is used in the sense of "dark" or "tawny". So he is not a veritable Negro, though he is represented as "thick-lipped" in the first scene of the play. On the other hand, he has a magnetic personality. He is able to attract, influence and command people. In short, he is a born leader of men.

He is a romantic figure. Bradley says, "*Othello is by far the most romantic figure among Shakespeare's heroes.*" He hails from Morocco. He has always lived a life of adventure and romance. He has travelled widely. He has seen men who eat one another and men whose heads grow on their breasts. 'He has been to lands full of deserts, wild caves and' mountains as high as the sky. He has been to Aleppo and has seen medicinal gum dropping from trees in Arabia.' born in a royal family, he has seen the ups and downs of life. Once he was sold as a slave and with great difficulty he secured his release. As he narrates the story of his life to Brabantio, Desdemona's father, she hears it and loves him for the dangers he underwent. She says; "*I saw Othello's face in his mind.*" He has the imagination and the idealising faculty of a romantic poet. The story of his love for Desdemona, as told in the Duke's hall, is one of the most beautiful pieces of romance in all Shakespeare. His speeches reveal him to be a born poet. Even his casual phrases are full of poetry. While narrating the course of his love in the Duke's hall, he says,

"She loved me for the dangers I had passed,  
And I loved her that she did pity them."

His poetic talent is revealed by his words when he meets Desdemona before expectation at Cyprus. He says,

"If it were now to die.  
It were how to be most happy."

He is a born soldier. He is an able General. He is a great hero of many a battle. He has passed through "*moving accidents by flood and field*". The Duke acknowledges his ability and popularity as a General. Montano says that he commands like "*a full soldier*". Even Iago admits his ability as a General when he says, "*Another of his fathom they have none To lead their business.*"

He has remarkable dignity and self-control. He can face any trying situation with great presence of mind. When Brabantio and his men threaten him with drawn swords, he is not afraid. He rejects Iago's advice to hide. He boldly faces them and says,



*"Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them, Good signior, you shall more command with years, Than with your weapons."*

This incident reveals his courage, presence of mind and his ability to rise to occasion.

He is honest, frank and gullible. He is ignorant of the ways of the world. He lacks insight into human nature. He regards Iago as a man of honesty and fully believes his words. Iago fully and successfully exploits his merits and brings about his fall.

He is not a mere jealous husband like Leontes or Ford. Desdemona says that he is not jealous by nature. Had he been jealous or suspicious, he would have seen through the tricks of Iago. He fully believes Iago's words about her character. He rashly concludes that his honour is at stake and that it is his duty to kill her. He is afraid that his love of her may deflect him from his duty of killing her. Hence he hurries on her murder from "within three days" to "this night". He regards the killing of her as an act of justice. Hudson says that the struggle in him is not between love and jealousy, but between love and honour. Bradley says, *"This is not a representation of spontaneous, but of artificially induced jealousy; in other words, credulity poisoned by jealousy."*

To sum up, Othello is brave, heroic, modest, dignified and self-possessed. But he is over-credulous like Lear. His simplicity, his want of judgement, his inexperience of the ways of the world, his absolute trust, confidence, credulity and rashness cause his tragedy. Professor Gordon says, *"Othello is a hero in the old, unvarnished and unashamed romantic sense of one born to do marvels and fill the world with his name."*

#### 4. Sketch the character of Iago in Shakespeare's *Othello*.

Shakespeare has created immortal characters in the history of world literature. He is particularly known for the creation of villains of genius. Herford rightly observes:

Shakespeare has drawn his full length villains from Machiavelli who provided with sensational criminals.

Edmund in *King Lear*, Richard in *Richard III*, Iago in *Othello* are some of the villains in the representative tragedies of Shakespeare. Iago in *Othello*, according to Coleridge, "is superior to the other villains in profundity of conception and wealth of psychological detail."

Critics like Wilson Knights and L.C.Knight's feel that Iago has 'motiveless malignity'. One cannot possibly agree with them. Iago has a specific motive in expressing his hatred for Othello. He feels injured for Cassio has been promoted a lieutenant whereas his own claims have been ignored. So he decides to take revenge upon others. In his own words,

*I will wear my heart upon my sleeve  
For daws to peck at; 'I am not what I am'...  
I will plague him with flies." (Act I, Scene 1, l.63)*

These lines show that Iago has a specific purpose of motive in inflicting mental pain on others.

Iago like a stock figure in Italian romance, is a rejected lover who avenges himself by slandering the lady to her husband. He doesn't love Desdemona as he is incapable of

loving anyone. He seems to think that Cassio loves her and that she loves him. These facts interest him in fulfilling his game.

There are, indeed, two Iagos in the tragedy. 'Honest Iago', whom nobody suspects, and the 'inhuman Machiavellian villain of the soliloquies and the asides.

Iago shows great respect and affection for Othello and at the same time he preserves his self-respect and dignity. Hence Othello in a sublime poetic image, declares that Iago has all styles at command, simulates his exaltation. He says,

*This fellow's (Iago) of exceeding honesty,  
And know all qualities, with a learned spirit,  
Of human dealings."* (Act II, Scene 3, l.258)

This Othello's eminence, goodness and perpetual annoyance pave the way 'to enjoy fooling and tormenting Othello' (A.C. Bradley). Even Cassio and Desdemona approach him for aid in their troubles.

Iago finally proves himself that he is not simply a man of action but is an artist. His action is a plot, the intricate plot of a drama and in the conception and execution of it he experiences the tension and the joy of an artistic creation. 'He is' says Hazlitt, "an amateur of tragedy in real life." He also declares to be "One of Shakespeare's works of supererogation." In the words of A.C. Bradley, "Iago is a man of supreme intellect who is at the same time supremely wicked."

## 5. Write an essay on dramatic irony in *Othello*.

Dramatic irony is a way of contrast. It is a figure of speech. It is an inheritance from the Greek drama. It is used both in tragedy and comedy. It consists in the use of words which bear one meaning to the speakers (characters) and an additional and more important meaning to the audience. The speakers are utterly ignorant of the second meaning, while the spectators fully understand it and enjoy it.

Dramatic irony is of two kinds: (i) Verbal irony and (ii) Irony of situation or circumstance. *Othello* is rich in both these forms. It enables the dramatist to create a tragic atmosphere. It fills the atmosphere with a sense of foreboding, with a sense of fate or destiny working against the will of the human actors.

The very beginning of *Othello* is an instance of dramatic irony. For we are introduced to an ironical world. Othello's marriage with Desdemona is "*a drama with an ironically happy ending.*"

Brabantio tells Othello that Desdemona has deceived her father and that she may deceive her husband. These words are full of dramatic irony for Iago makes deadly use of these words. Cassio welcomes Desdemona to Cyprus with great enthusiasm. He says that the forces of Nature are unwilling to harm Desdemona and have therefore allowed her safe voyage from Venice to Cyprus. He says that the seas "*Omit their mortal natures, letting go safely by The divine Desdemona.*" Bradley says, "*For those who know the story there is terrible irony in the enthusiasm.*" There are other seas close at hand that are going to be fatal to Desdemona. Cassio does not know them, but we know.

There is dramatic irony in Othello's remark to Desdemona soon after her arrival in Cyprus; "*Honey, you shall be well desired in Cyprus*", Othello and Desdemona feel very

happy when they meet in Cyprus after a long time. Othello says, .... *if it were now to die It were now to be most happy; for, I fear, My soul hath her content so absolute That not another comfort like this succeeds in unknown fate.*"

Othello thus expresses his ecstasy. The spectators know that his bliss is short-lived. But Othello does not know his future. Hence his words are full of dramatic irony.

A good deal of dramatic irony in *Othello* is related to words like "honest" and "honesty". Othello thinks that Iago is an honest man. He says of him, "*This fellow is of an exceeding honesty*". But we know that Iago is most dishonest. Prof. Nicoll considers the use of the adjective "honest" for Iago a superb example of verbal irony. In the Night-brawl scene, Othello tells Cassio, "*Michael, good night. Tomorrow, with your earliest, Let me have speech with you.*"

We know that by tomorrow Othello will be refusing to speak with Cassio. Hence these words of Othello are full of dramatic irony.

In Act III, Scene iii, there is effective dramatic irony in Emilia's words when she requests Desdemona to do her best in pleading with her husband on behalf of Cassio:

*"Good madam -I warrant it grieves my husband, As if the cause were his."*

"The cause" is indeed Iago's in a sense that she does not realise. Another example of dramatic irony occurs in the same scene, when Desdemona assures Cassio that she will rather die than give his cause away, for indeed she dies as a result of her importunity to her husband on behalf of Cassio. Desdemona kneels before Iago and begs his help. She says,

*"O, good Iago  
What should I do to win my lord again?  
Good friend, go to him: for by this light of heaven,  
I know not how I lost him."*

This is an excellent example of the irony of situation. For Desdemona is kneeling here before Iago, addressing him as "good Iago" and "good friend" and seeking his help to solve her problem. She is, totally ignorant of the fact that he-is the author of her problem. But the spectators are aware of it. Another example of irony of the situation is that Desdemona, about to be murdered and unlucky, to the end, chooses just the words to confirm Othello's belief that she loves Cassio.

*Othello* is full of the irony of action. Desdemona is killed by the man whom she loves most ardently. Likewise Othello kills the woman he loves more than anything else in the world. Thus *Othello* is full of dramatic irony of various kinds.

**6. "*Othello* is a tragedy of Chance or Fate." Discuss. (or)  
Write an essay on the part played by Chance or Fate or Accident in *Othello*.**

Shakespeare's *Othello* is a tragedy of Chance or Fate or Accident because it plays a remarkably important role. It is a tribute to the dramatic power of Shakespeare that the large part played by Chance or Fate or Accident does not appear odd or artificial but natural and convincing.

Bradley rightly says that in a Shakespearean tragedy the calamities and sufferings do not simply happen nor are they sent from above by some supreme power. They spring from "*action issuing from character or character issuing in action*". Hence it is said that in

a Shakespearean tragedy "*Character is destiny*". This dictum is true in a limited sense. For character alone does not lead to the catastrophe. It is character in conjunction with circumstance that brings about the tragic fall of the hero. Hence Bradley observes:

*Shakespearean conception of tragedy involved, over and above character, the suggestion of fatal force's operating on the action of mankind." Chance happenings have their own role in human life. In a Shakespearean tragedy, besides the character and the actions of the tragic hero, they bring about the catastrophe. In Othello there are many chance happenings.*

A noble and trustful soul like Othello has a villain like as his assistant. Othello, a Moor, falls in love with an Italian lady and she reciprocates his love.

Desdemona drops her handkerchief and does not pick it up and it is the handkerchief that Othello gave her as his first present.

Emilia picks it up and gives it to her husband. Cassio gives it to Bianca to have the embroidery taken out. Othello sees it in Cassio's hand. Bianca happens to be at hand to help in deceiving Othello in the Eavesdropping Scene.

All these accidents help Iago in deceiving Othello. Herford observes: "*The great distinctive feature of the drama among the mature tragedies, lies not in the hero, magnificent creation as he is, but in the external agency by which the tragic situation is brought out.*"

Fate or Chance favours Iago till Desdemona is murdered. During the temptation of Othello, a chance word from Desdemona or a chance meeting of Othello and Cassio would have destroyed Iago's plot and ended his life. But it doesn't happen since "*fate has taken sides with villainy.*" Thus chance invariably favours Iago until Desdemona is murdered. But afterwards it turns hostile to Iago and brings about his fall. For Emilia's questions to Iago expose him and make Othello realise his mistake.

Thus chance plays a very remarkable role in *Othello*, It appears to be quite natural and convincing on account of the dramatic power of Shakespeare. Professor S.A. Brooke sums up the role of chance in *Othello* in the following words: "*Fate dominates Macbeth, but here in Othello Chance or Unreason, blind fascinated by her beauty and kisses her several times. He weeps but his tears do not soften his heart. He is ready to strike where he loves the most. S.A. Brooke says of this soliloquy: "There is an unspeakable grief in every word, of the soliloquy. He is no longer furious; he is deadly quiet; and he is quiet because after tossing to and fro in doubt, he is resolved to kill."*

Iago makes nearly half a dozen soliloquies in *Othello*. His first soliloquy is at the end of Act I. It gives us insight into the character of Iago and suggests what he may do. It reveals his scorn of Roderigo, his hatred of Othello, and his cool realisation of the Moor's frankness and his dangerous tendency to over-estimate men's, honesty.

His second<sup>1</sup> soliloquy occurs at the end of Scene i, Act II. It is full of the most emphatic and melodramatic wickedness. Here he explains his real mind. He regards Roderigo as a fool and is simply using him as his tool. He decides to bring about the downfall of Cassio and to rouse the jealousy of the Moor. His plan is yet confused. He has not finalized the details. He says, "*Knavery's plain face is never seen till used.*"

His third soliloquy comes towards the end of Scene iii, Act II. Here Iago is in a jubilant mood. He has already secured Cassio's dismissal. His plan of action is now clear

to him. He decides to make Othello jealous of Cassio. He feels certain that the more Desdemona pleads for Cassio, the more she will lose her credit with her husband. He refers to Cassio as an “honest fool”. His villainy becomes clear to the audience for the first time. While offering advice to Cassio as an honest friend, he plans to destroy Othello and Desdemona.

His fourth soliloquy occurs in the middle of Scene iii, Act III. He reveals his intention to drop the handkerchief of Desdemona in the room of Cassio. He will make Othello see it and make use of it as a proof of Desdemona’s illicit love for Cassio.

His final soliloquy occurs in Scene i, Act V. He reveals his awareness of the danger which threatens him both from Cassio and Roderigo. Hence he sets Roderigo to kill Cassio. He will be very happy if they kill each other. He says of Cassio,

*“He hath a daily beauty in his life  
That makes me ugly”.*

Thus the soliloquies of Iago throw much light on his character. The impression that we get from them is that he acts and plots with motiveless malignity. He is like ‘Vice’ in the old Morality Plays for destroying all goodness and beauty, though he gets no personal advantage there from.

## **7. Write an essay on the importance of the Temptation Scene in *Othello*.**

The third scene of the Third Act of *Othello* is known as the Temptation Scene. Moulton describes it as the ‘*suggestion-scene*’. It is the turning point of the entire play. It depicts how Iago develops jealousy in Othello’s mind.

It opens with Cassio’s interview with Desdemona. She promises to him to do her best to get him reinstated. Their interview is cut short by the arrival of Othello and Iago. Cassio departs without speaking to Othello. Then Iago makes the insinuating remark, “*Ha I like not that.*” He also makes the suggestive remark that Cassio stole away “so *quilty - like*” on Othello’s arrival. Then he keeps silent while Desdemona presses Cassio’s suit.

After Desdemona leaves, Iago renews his attack. First, he pretends to be ignorant of the fact that Cassio had been acquainted with Desdemona during Othello’s courtship of her. Then the way in which he says “*indeed!*” on hearing that Cassio carried messages during their courtship, strikes Othello. Iago’s hesitation about expressing his opinion about Cassio naturally makes Othello suspicious. But before proceeding further, Iago sounds Othello further. Othello professes absolute trust in Iago’s honesty: Then Iago says that “*Cassio is an honest man.*” At the same time he wishes that men would be what they seem. Thus he increases Othello’s impatience.

Yet Othello is wise enough to repudiate the thought of jealousy. Then Iago discovers Othello’s weak point — his inferiority complex. He plays upon it by recalling the words of Brabantio. He stresses three points: (1) the general deceitfulness of Venetian women; (2) Desdemona’s deception of her father; and (3) the singularity and even unnaturalness of her choice of Othello. He succeeds in engendering poison in Othello’s mind and directs suspicion to Cassio and leaves him for a while.

In his soliloquy after Iago’s departure, Othello dwells upon his black complexion and his lack of grace of manner as the cause of Desdemona’s faithlessness. When he meets



Desdemona next, his behaviour undergoes a change. Meanwhile Iago gets hold of Desdemona's handkerchief which is to be his trump card.

Othello is more than half-convinced that Desdemona is false to him. He suffers the worst torment of jealousy. When he meets Iago again, he demands from him "*the ocular proof*" of Desdemona's guilt. This demand shakes Iago for a moment. He assumes righteous indignation that disarms Othello. He also gives a vivid picture of Cassio's dream and claims to have seen the handkerchief that was Othello's gift to Desdemona in Cassio's hands.

Othello's jealousy and spirit of revenge are fully roused. He takes an oath to wreck vengeance on Cassio and Desdemona. He arranges the death of Cassio to be brought about by Iago. With his appointment of Iago as his lieutenant, the scene comes to an end. Thus, the Temptation Scene in *Othello* is remarkable :

- (i) for its suspense regarding the fate of Othello and Desdemona;
- (ii) for the internalisation of the action of the play;
- (iii) for the light it throws on the main characters of the play, Desdemona, Othello and Iago;
- (iv) for the sympathy it arouses in our hearts for the suffering Othello; and
- (v) for the role of chance in the tragedy.

### 8. Write an essay on *Othello* as a tragedy of intrigue.

The action and catastrophe of *Othello* depend largely on intrigue. Thus it is that the play is often styled as a tragedy of intrigues. But this tragedy of intrigues is also a tragedy of character, for Iago's action is Iago's character in action.

There are four actions in the play, which are conscious intrigues, all carried on by the master-plotter, Iago. The first is Iago's intrigue against Roderigo. It is the simplest of all his intrigues; it is just the plan of a cheat to extract all the money he can out of his dupe and then get rid of him. When Desdemona is married to Othello, Iago tells the disappointed suitor, "I could never better tread there than now." He assures his dupe that Desdemona cannot long continue her love to the Moor, and tells him to put money in his purse, to follow the wars, and to disguise himself with a beard. Roderigo is cheered up and goes to sell all his land. Then in a soliloquy Iago says:

*"Thus do I ever make my fool my purse. Live Roderigo,  
He calls me to a restitution large  
Of gold and jewels that I bobbed from him,  
As gifts to Desdemona.  
It must not, be."*

So, when he fails to tackle him with other means, he resorts to stabbing him in the back.

Iago's intrigues against Cassio are two-fold animated by two separate motives. His first grudge against Cassio is that the post of Othello's lieutenant has fallen to a foreigner instead of on himself, who, he thinks, deserve it better. He believes that Cassio is just a great mathematician, who never set squadron to the field and who never knows a division in the field more than a spinster. The jealousy of Cassio's elevation makes Iago study lieutenant closely with a view to find out the weak point in his character which he can use as the means of his downfall. This weakness is his light head



for drink. Cassio drinks most unwillingly, and in circumstances which made refusal seem discourtesy. But the poison acts on him at once, and he is betrayed into an unmilitary conduct, which Iago cunningly makes it seem a nightly brawl. So the villain gains his end. Cassio is dismissed.

But Iago does not rest here. He is in for the total undoing of Cassio. He has suspicions that Cassio has some secret affection for Emilia, and feels that Cassio has wronged him in his wedded life. So he says:

*"If Cassio do remain, He hath a daily beauty in his life That makes me ugly."*

Iago's grudge against the Moor is that the latter has preferred Cassio to himself to the post of his lieutenant. There is also the additional motive of suspicion. He thinks that Othello too has had some unfair dealings with Emilia. He does not know this for certainty :

*"But I, for mere suspicion in that kind, Will do as if for surety."*

The feeling grows the stronger by brooding. He feels that nothing can content his soul till he is evened with him, wife for wife. And so he wants to put the Moor into such a strong jealousy that judgment cannot cure. This gives rise to the fourth intrigue of Iago, which constitutes one of the main actions of the play.

Thus we can state that *Othello* is a tragedy of intrigues. Though the intrigues develop from character, they lead up to action that bring about the catastrophe.

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**Unit 3 (A) – Background**  
**Prose: Origin and Development of the Essay and its Kinds**

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**Origin and Development of the Essay**

Etymologically the word 'essay' has come from the French word 'assay' which means 'an attempt.' Today it is applied to a literary composition devoted to the presentation of the writer's own ideas on a topic and generally addressing a particular aspect of the subject. Usually, but by no means invariably, brief in scope and informal in style, the essay therefore differs from such formal expository forms as the thesis, dissertation, or treatise. Johnson defines it as

A loose sally of the mind: an irregular, indigested piece; not a regular and orderly composition.

Roman writers like Theophrastus, Plutarch, Cicero and Seneca are considered as the originators of the essay. But Montaigne, the father of essay, gave it the standard name through his French essays. Bacon, the supreme essayist or the father of the English essay, was the first to use English terms in his essays. He wrote essays on a broad range of subjects like 'truth,' 'adversity,' including ethics, philosophy, science, law, history, and politics. According to W.H. Hudson,

The true essay is essentially personal. It belongs to the literature of self expression. Treatise and Dissertation may be objective, but the essay is subjective.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the essay evolved as periodical and social essays with Addison, Steele's *Tatler* and *Spectator*. They in their periodicals exposed the artificial life of the people of the times. Addison's essay delineates the character of Sir Roger de Coverley. Johnson published his essays in *The Rambler*. Goldsmith's essays appeared in *The Public Ledger*.

In the nineteenth century the Romantic Movement changed the character of the essay, just as it did to poetry. Leigh Hunt resumed the tradition of the periodical essay, but he had no special gift of pathos or humour. In the meantime, Hazlitt and Lamb had appeared as notable essayists. Hazlitt turned the essay to the literary purpose. He is

famous for the lucidity and brilliance, in both style and content. One sees a strong egotism in his essays; yet we cannot call him a 'personal essayist.'

Charles Lamb is another writer who holds a unique place in the development of the essay. His name is mainly associated with his personal and autobiographical essays. In the words of Cazamian,

The essay, a form which provides Lamb with his favourite mode of expression becomes in his hands the artificial but precious instrument of a constant self-revelation.

Lamb in his *Essays of Elia* reveals to us his sweetness of heart, pathos, humour, and his day-to-day experience in life. E.V. Lucas aptly says,

The essays of Lamb are 'amusing, paradoxical, ingenious, touching and eloquent.'

*Dream Children* is one of the most popular essays of Lamb. It is highly moving, heart-rending and imbued with the tragedy of his life. It is a reverie because it contains a fanciful or imaginary account. In the modern period, notable essayists such as Virginia Woolf, E.M. Forster, V.S. Pritchett, and Robert Lynd contributed much to 'essay.' In the words of A.C. Benson,

The essay is a little criticism at some one point clearly enough defining.

## Kinds of Essays

### Descriptive Essay

A descriptive essay is an essay that describes something or defines something. Descriptive essays are often subjective tasks. The first issue at hand is to make sure you know what type of story you are writing. The descriptive essay is often creative, personal, or simply artistic. Discuss the assignment with your professor or teacher before you begin.

Even though your descriptive essay is more personal than a standard five-paragraph or compare-contrast essay, there is still quite a bit of homework to be done. Here is a list of important rules to follow as you write this essay.

1. Understand the concept
2. Do your research
3. Outline the paper
4. Write the paper
5. Re-write the paper
6. Edit (outside editors)

Descriptive essays rely on their nominal stature. It is more important to use imagery and metaphorical language than scientific data. Descriptive essays are not mathematic entries, nor are they always factual. They are opinions. Consequently, you can try to write and describe anything you desire. You simply have to do it well. As horrible as that sounds, your professors and teachers will tell you the same thing. Here are some tips to remember when writing your descriptive essay:

1. Actually describe something
2. Use concrete and abstract images
3. Use concrete and abstract ideas
4. Do not go overboard with adjectives and adverbs
5. Do not go overboard with similes and metaphors
6. Give it to someone else to see if your essay actually describes something

While it may seem rather vague initially, sometimes a descriptive essay can be the most liberating and pleasurable essay to write. You are just writing something as you see it. If you can prove and describe an idea or image in language, then you have accomplished your task. Documentation and hard research are not always necessary components (although they may be).

### Narrative Essay

A Narrative Essay is just a story that you are telling to the reader something that you would normally in conversation, so it is best to use first person so that sounds more personal. It creates a picture in the readers mind with details, plots, and characters. The goal of a **Narrative Essay** is to tell a story or a part of a story. Narrative writing is a type of essay writing that recreates an experience. This experience can be one which you have personally experienced yourself, in the past or the present, or it can be something that was experienced by someone else. Besides narrating a story, such essay types also convey an important central idea or valuable lesson.

### Steps to Begin Essay

- Decide on the experience that you want to relate.
- Identify the significance of this experience.
- Note down everything you remember about the experience.
- Create an essay outline of the basic parts of your story.

### Characteristics of Narrative Writing

Narrative Essay writing has a number of general characteristics. These characteristics are:

- Plot Structure (Introduction, Rising action, Climax, Falling action, Resolution)
- Conflict
- Characterization
- Placement
- Theme
- Opinion
- Sequencing
- Transitions

Most narrative essays contain these elements. When we write any narrative essay, one should try and ensure that their essay contains these basic characteristics.

### Reflective Essay

A reflective essay is a piece of writing that basically involves your views and feelings about a particular subject. The goal of a reflective essay is to not only discuss what you learned, but to convey the personal experiences and findings that resulted.

### Function

A reflective essay concentrates on your ideas and reflections about a topic; however you want to show your readers why the points you are making are valid. To do so, the information that led to your conclusions should be included in the paper. Having references adds to your credibility and will illustrate to your audience that your findings result from both facts and personal experience. A good reflective essay includes an insightful interpretation of the matter at hand. The feelings and experiences that you write about in the essay should be based on your own perception and showcase to the readers why your revelation is significant on a larger scale. The essay should communicate both the importance of the topic as well your consideration of it.

### Features

Although reflective essays may not have a definite structural design, there are certain formats and guidelines that you should stick to. Your opening paragraph, sometimes referred to as the thesis, should inform the reader about your topic and also engage him. After he finishes reading the introduction of your essay, he should be eager to read the rest. The body of your reflective essay should reveal your ideas and experiences with the subject that you are writing about. If you are writing about an event, describe its progression. Include different aspects of the experience and how it shaped your findings. In the conclusion of your reflective essay, reflect upon your topic for and discuss its impact on you as well as the probable impact that it may have for others.



### **Imaginative Essay**

An imaginative essay is fiction, actually a type of short story. Students are asked to imagine a particular historical or fantastic situation and write the rest of the story. Depending on the prompt, the imaginative essay can discuss anything from space travel to civil rights. Because of this wide variation, some imaginative essays require a very serious response, while others invite a much more light-hearted, fantastic one.

### **Expository Essay**

Expository essays provide information and analysis. An expository essay may or may not have an overt central argument, though it does set forth points of view on the topic. It differs from the persuasive research paper in the level of research and argument it employs. While an expository essay should be focused on a particular topic and illustrate its points with specific examples, it doesn't usually have the depth of research or argument that you need in a major research assignment. With an exam or a standardized test, for instance, the examples you use to support your points will be based on the knowledge already inside your head.

An expository essay does have certain baseline requirements that are standard in nearly every essay type:

- A clear thesis or controlling idea that establishes and sustains your focus.
- An opening paragraph that introduces the thesis.
- Body paragraphs that use specific evidence to illustrate your informative or analytic points.
- Smooth transitions that connect the ideas of adjoining paragraphs in specific, interesting ways.
- A conclusion that emphasizes your central idea without being repetitive.

### **Personal Essays of Charles Lamb**

The Personal Essay is a short work of autobiographical nonfiction characterized by a sense of intimacy and a conversational manner. It is defined more by the personality of its writer, which takes precedence over subject. The subject matter of personal essay traditionally concerns common things, tending toward 'a taste for littleness.' Human relations with family and friends is a frequent topic, as are childhood reminiscences, and the consideration of pastimes are some of the other themes one finds in personal essays. The personal essayist often has a serious point to make. The tone of the personal essay is usually light, often nostalgic without being sentimental and gently humorous.

Charles Lamb's genius lay in his power of recalling his personal memories. He knows instinctively which of his powerful memories is best suited to the story he wants to narrate, and with the help of literary devices of other writers and his own imagination. He picks and culls from memory and suddenly, under his pen a whole new world emerges – fresh and original. Everything subject matter he writes belongs to a bygone era – his haunts, his charm, a vanished face, a hushed voice, etc. He loved to chew the cud of a bygone vision and by going over his memories in his mind over and over again, clothe them in a garb of his imagination.

Lamb's *Essays of Elia* are seen as 'autobiographical fragments' chiefly because they do not help us construct the inner life of the author or his motives for writing them. The fragments one gleans from "Night Fears" and in "Christ's Hospital" are of Lamb's boyhood; in "The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple" and in "My Relations" one gets a peep into his family; while in "Mockery End in Hertfordshire," one learns of his youthful adventures. And in "Mrs. Battle's Opinions," and "Old China" one gets a ringside view of his long-standing and close relationship with his sister Mary. "Dream Children" from *Essays of Elia* is one such powerful personal essay.

Though Lamb does not depict any vulgarity in these intimacies, despite being utterly frank, he does not sentimentalise. He accepts the finality of his sad memories, but doesn't beg for reader's sympathy. His rendition is so beautiful that he preserves it with us as a fine art through which one can differentiate between reality and illusion. Thus, Lamb is best known for his personal essays.

### **Development of Literary Periodicals and Magazines in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries**

Periodicals are publications released at regular intervals. They are often called journals, or referred to as magazines when designating those for recreational reading. The most famous of the essay periodicals of the 18<sup>th</sup> century were perhaps the British publications *The Tatler* (1709-1711) and *The Spectator* (1711-1712, 1714), the creations of the renowned essayists Sir Richard Steele and Joseph Addison; and *The Rambler* (1750-1752) and *The Idler* (1758-1760, revived in 1993), founded by Samuel Johnson.

*The Tatler* and *The Spectator* mixed news with personal reflections and became great favourites as a source of coffee-house conversation. Mixing politics, social observations, literary and theatrical criticism, serious essays, and sly satire, they became enormously popular and influence, both at the time and on later generations of journalists and essayists. The stated goal of *The Spectator* was “to enliven morality with wit, and to temper wit with morality...to bring philosophy out of the closets and libraries, schools and colleges, to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables and coffeehouses” (No. 10). It recommended that its readers “consider it part of the tea-equipage” (No. 10) and not leave the house without reading it in the morning. One of its functions was to provide readers with educated, topical talking points, and advice in how to carry on conversations and social interactions in a polite manner. In keeping with the values of Enlightenment philosophies of their time, the authors of *The Spectator* promoted family, marriage, and courtesy. Steele’s idea was to publish the news and gossip heard in London coffeehouses, hence the title, and seemingly, from the opening paragraph, to leave the subject of politics to the newspapers, while presenting Whiggish views and correcting middle-class manners, while instructing “these Gentlemen, for the most part being Persons of strong Zeal, and weak Intellects ... *what to think.*”

Even in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, monthly or quarterly reviews, usually partisan in politics, and with articles contributed by eminent authors and politicians, were introduced in Great Britain. Of these, two became outstanding. *The Edinburgh Review* (1802-1929), founded in support of the Whig party, was one of the most influential critical journals of its day, numbering among its contributors the British writers Sir Walter Scott, Thomas Carlyle, Matthew Arnold, and William Hazlitt.

Popular weeklies and monthlies, some illustrated and selling for only a few pennies each, made their appearance in Britain in the second quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; among them were *The Mirror* (1822-1849), a two-penny illustrated magazine, and *The Cornhill Magazine* (1860-1939). *The Cornhill*, first edited by the English novelist William Makepeace Thackeray, was the first sixpenny monthly to publish fiction regularly in serial form; these serials included novels by the editor and such contemporaries as Elizabeth Gaskell and Anthony Trollope.

### **Bacon's Prose Style**

The most influential and versatile English writer of the 17th century, Francis Bacon wrote on a broad range of topics, including ethics, philosophy, science, law, history, and politics. His *Essays* have become classics of the English language and they owe their position not only to their subject matter, but also to their inimitable style and fine literary touch.

The most obvious quality of Bacon's style, one which strikes even a cursory reader, is terseness of expression and epigrammatic shortness. Many of his sentences can be expanded into full paragraphs. His style is aphoristic. A large number of his observations have become proverbial, and popular, household commonplaces. His sentences are brief, and rapid, but they are also forceful. As Dean Church points out they "come down like the strokes of a hammer." This terseness and brevity he acquires by avoiding superfluous epithets and leaving out conjunctions and sentences. Let us cite at random only a few examples of this concentrated expression:

Crafty men condemn studies, simple men admire them, and wise men use them.

Read not to contradict, nor to believe, but to weigh and consider.

Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed and some few to be chewed and digested.

Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man.

All these sentences form a single paragraph. Each of them is a disjointed aphorism, the only bond binding them together being the unity of subject. Such a style may very well be called telegraphic or stenographic which is sententious and almost oracular.

Another important feature of Bacon's style is the extensive use of quotations, allusions, and references. Bacon uses broadcast throughout his essays. His style thus becomes a "mosaic of quotations, and allusions." There are quotations from *The Bible*, from the classics like Ovid, Virgil, Plato, Cicero, Aristotle, from the schoolmen of the middle ages and from history.

Another trick of style favourite with Bacon is to begin an essay with some fine aphorism, definition or a catching phrase. For instance, the essay entitled *Of Cunning* begins with the fine definition of Cunning, and then it is contrasted with wisdom. Sometimes the essays end with equally fine epigrams.

Bacon style is witty. He is, no doubt, wanting in humour, but he has ample of wit. Wit is a matter of the skilful use of words and Bacon is a master of such use. He was extraordinarily alive to analogy, incongruity and contrast, and his skilful manipulation of words could also make his readers appreciate them. To quote only a few examples: "Through indignities men rise to dignities", "by pain men came to greater pains", "men who

have no friends are cannibals of their own hearts.” Such wit constitutes at least one-half of the charm of Bacon’s essays.

Another striking feature of Bacon’s style is his constant use of figurative language. His similes and metaphors are apt, vivid, and suggestive. They are no mere ornaments, rather they impart force, charm and clarity to his style. Some of them, like those quoted below, are extremely poetic and bear witness to Bacon’s exuberant fancy:

Certainly it is heaven upon earth to have a man’s mind move in charity, rest in providence, and turn upon the poles of truth.

Learning is both the lark that soars and sings and the hawk that soars and swoops.

Virtue is like precious odours, most fragrant when they are incensed or crushed.

Thus, Bacon was a consummate artist who polished and chiselled his expressions and who could change his style to suit his subject. Hence he has not one style, nor two styles as Macaulay thinks, but styles as varied as his subjects. With him, English prose definitely took a long step forward.

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**Unit 3 (B) – Essays Prescribed**

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**OF STUDIES** (1625)

Francis Bacon (1561-1626)

Studies serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability. Their chief use for delight is in privateness and retiring; for ornament, is in discourse; and for ability, is in the judgment and disposition of business. For expert men can execute, and perhaps judge of particulars, one by one; but the general counsels, and the plots and marshalling of affairs, come best from those that are learned. To spend too much time in studies is sloth; to use them too much for ornament, is affectation; to make judgment wholly by their rules, is the humor of a scholar. They perfect nature, and are perfected by experience: for natural abilities are like natural plants, that need pruning, by study; and studies themselves do give forth directions too much at large, except they be bounded in by experience. Crafty men condemn studies, simple men admire them, and wise men use them; for they teach not their own use; but that is a wisdom without them, and above them, won by observation. Read not to contradict and confute; nor to believe and take for granted; nor to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider. Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested; that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention. Some books also may be read by deputy, and extracts made of them by others; but that would be only in the less important arguments, and the meaner sort of books, else distilled books are like common distilled waters, flashy things. Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man. And therefore, if a man write little, he had need have a great memory; if he confer little, he had need have a present wit: and if he read little, he had need have much cunning, to seem to know that he doth not. Histories make men wise; poets witty; the mathematics subtle; natural philosophy deep; moral grave; logic and rhetoric able to contend. *Abeunt studia in mores* [Studies pass into and influence manners]. Nay, there is no stond or impediment in the wit but may be wrought out by fit studies; like as diseases of the body may have appropriate exercises. Bowling is good for the stone and reins; shooting for the lungs and breast; gentle walking for the stomach; riding for the head; and the like. So if a man's wit be wandering, let him study the mathematics; for in demonstrations, if his wit be called away never so little, he must begin again. If his wit be not apt to distinguish or find differences, let him study the Schoolmen; for they are *cymini sectores* [splitters of hairs]. If he be not apt to beat over matters, and to call up one thing to prove and illustrate another, let him study the lawyers' cases. So every defect of the mind may have a special receipt.

**OF YOUTH AND AGE** (1625)

A MAN that is young in years may be old in hours, if he have lost no time. But that happeneth rarely. Generally, youth is like the first cogitations, not so wise as the second. For there is a youth in thoughts, as well as in ages. And yet the invention of young men is more lively than that of old; and imaginations stream into their minds better, and as it were more divinely. Natures that have much heat and great and violent desires and perturbations are not ripe for action till they have passed the meridian of their years; as it was with Julius Cæsar and Septimius Severus. Of the latter of whom it is said, *Juventutem egit erroribus, imo furoribus, plenam* [He passed a youth full of errors, yea of madnesses]. And yet he was the



ablest emperor, almost, of all the list. But reposed natures may do well in youth. As it is seen in Augustus Cæsar, Cosmus Duke of Florence, Gaston de Foix, and others. On the other side, heat and vivacity in age is an excellent composition for business. Young men are fitter to invent than to judge; fitter for execution than for counsel; and fitter for new projects than for settled business. For the experience of age, in things that fall within the compass of it, directeth them; but in new things, abuseth them. The errors of young men are the ruin of business; but the errors of aged men amount but to this, that more might have been done, or sooner. Young men, in the conduct and manage of actions, embrace more than they can hold; stir more than they can quiet; fly to the end, without consideration of the means and degrees; pursue some few principles which they have chanced upon absurdly; care not to 2 innovate, which draws unknown inconveniences; use extreme remedies at first; and that which doubleth all errors will not acknowledge or retract them; like an unready 3 horse, that will neither stop nor turn. Men of age object too much, consult too long, adventure too little, repent too soon, and seldom drive business home to the full period, 4 but content themselves with a mediocrity of success. Certainly it is good to compound employments of both; for that will be good for the present, because the virtues of either age may correct the defects of both; and good for succession, that young men may be learners, while men in age are actors; and, lastly, good for extern accidents, because authority followeth old men, and favor and popularity youth. But for the moral part, perhaps youth will have the pre-eminence, as age hath for the politic. A certain rabbin, upon the text, *Your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams*, inferreth that young men are admitted nearer to God than old, because vision is a clearer revelation than a dream. And certainly, the more a man drinketh of the world, the more it intoxicateth; and age doth profit rather in the powers of understanding, than in the virtues of the will and affections. There be some have an over-early ripeness in their years, which fadeth betimes. These are, first, such as have brittle wits, the edge whereof is soon turned; such as was Hermogenes the rhetorician, whose books are exceeding subtle; who afterwards waxed stupid. A second sort is of those that have some natural dispositions which have better grace in youth than in age; such as is a fluent and luxuriant speech; which becomes youth well, but not age: so Tully saith of Hortensius, *Idem manebat, neque idem decebat* [He continued the same, when the same was not becoming]. The third is of such as take too high a strain at the first, and are magnanimous more than tract of years can uphold. As was Scipio Africanus, of whom Livy saith in effect, *Ultima primis cedebant* [His last actions were not equal to his first].

### **About the Author**

**Francis Bacon**, (22 January 1561 – 9 April 1626), the most influential and versatile English writer of the 17th century, wrote on a broad range of topics, including ethics, philosophy, science, law, history, and politics. Bacon helped usher in the era of modern scientific thought by developing a reasoning process called induction. Induction is the process by which general conclusions are drawn from particular situations.



He served both as Attorney General and Lord Chancellor of England. Although his political career ended in disgrace, he remained extremely influential through his works, especially as philosophical advocate and practitioner of the scientific method during the scientific revolution.

Bacon has been called the creator of empiricism.<sup>[2]</sup> His works established and popularised inductive methodologies for scientific inquiry, often called the *Baconian method*, or simply the scientific method. His demand for a planned procedure of investigating all things natural marked a new turn in the rhetorical and theoretical framework for science, much of which still surrounds conceptions of proper methodology today.

Bacon was born on 22 January 1561 at York House near the Strand in London, the son of Sir Nicholas Bacon by his second wife Anne (Cooke) Bacon, the daughter of noted humanist Anthony Cooke. His mother's sister was married to William Cecil, 1st Baron Burghley, making Burghley Francis Bacon's uncle. Biographers believe that Bacon was educated at home in his early years owing to poor health (which plagued him throughout his life), receiving tuition from John Walsall, a graduate of Oxford with a strong leaning towards Puritanism. He entered Trinity College, Cambridge, on 5 April 1573 at the age of twelve,<sup>[3]</sup> living for three years there together with his older brother Anthony Bacon under the personal tutelage of Dr John Whitgift, future Archbishop of Canterbury. Bacon's education was conducted largely in Latin and followed the medieval curriculum. He was also educated at the University of Poitiers. It was at Cambridge that he first met Queen Elizabeth, who was impressed by his precocious intellect, and was accustomed to calling him "the young Lord Keeper".

His studies brought him to the belief that the methods and results of science as then practised were erroneous. His reverence for Aristotle conflicted with his loathing of Aristotelian philosophy, which seemed to him barren, disputatious, and wrong in its objectives.

On 27 June 1576, he and Anthony entered *de societate magistrorum* at Gray's Inn. A few months later, Francis went abroad with Sir Amias Paulet, the English ambassador at Paris, while Anthony continued his studies at home. The state of government and society in France under Henry III afforded him valuable political instruction. For the next three years he visited Blois, Poitiers, Tours, Italy, and Spain. During his travels, Bacon studied language, statecraft, and civil law while performing routine diplomatic tasks. On at least one occasion he delivered diplomatic letters to England for Walsingham, Burghley, and Leicester, as well as for the queen.

The sudden death of his father in February 1579 prompted Bacon to return to England. Sir Nicholas had laid up a considerable sum of money to purchase an estate for his youngest son, but he died before doing so, and Francis was left with only a fifth of that money. Having borrowed money, Bacon got into debt. To support himself, he took up his residence in law at Gray's Inn in 1579.

### **Philosophy and Works**

Francis Bacon's Philosophy is displayed in the vast and varied writings he left, which might be divided in three great branches:

- *Scientific works* - in which his ideas for an universal reform of knowledge, scientific method and the improvement of mankind's state are presented.
- *Religious/literary works* - in which he presents his moral philosophy and theological meditations.
- *Juridical works* - in which his reforms in Law are proposed.

## Influence

### Science

Bacon's ideas were influential in the 1630s and 1650s among scholars, in particular Sir Thomas Browne, who in his encyclopaedia *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (1646–1672) frequently adheres to a Baconian approach to his scientific enquiries. During the Restoration, Bacon was commonly invoked as a guiding spirit of the Royal Society founded under Charles II in 1660. In the nineteenth century his emphasis on induction was revived and developed by William Whewell, among others. He has been reputed as the "Father of Experimental Science".

Bacon is also considered to be the philosophical influence behind the dawning of the Industrial age. In his works, Bacon called for a "spring of a progeny of inventions, which shall overcome, to some extent, and subdue our needs and miseries", always proposing that all scientific work should be done for charitable purposes, as matter of alleviating mankind's misery, and that therefore science should be practical and have as purpose the inventing of useful things for the improvement of mankind's estate. This changed the course of science in history, from a merely contemplative state, as it was found in ancient and medieval ages, to a practical, inventive state - that would have eventually led to the inventions that made possible the Industrial Revolutions of the following centuries.<sup>[38]</sup>

He also wrote a long treatise on Medicine, *History of Life and Death*,<sup>[41]</sup> with natural and experimental observations for the prolongation of life.

For one of his biographers, Hepworth Dixon, Bacon's influence in modern world is so great that every man who rides in a train, sends a telegram, follows a steam plough, sits in an easy chair, crosses the channel or the Atlantic, eats a good dinner, enjoys a beautiful garden, or undergoes a painless surgical operation, owes him something.<sup>[42]</sup>

### Historical debates

#### Bacon and Shakespeare

The Baconian theory of Shakespearean authorship, first proposed in the mid-19th century, contends that Sir Francis Bacon wrote some or all the plays conventionally attributed to William Shakespeare, in opposition to the scholarly consensus that William Shakespeare of Stratford was the author.

Francis Bacon's influence can also be seen on a variety of religious and spiritual authors, and on groups that have utilised his writings in their own belief systems.

***Essays: Religious Meditations. Places of Perswasion and Disswasion. Seene and Allowed*** (1597) was the first published book by the philosopher, statesman and jurist Francis Bacon. The *Essays* are written in a wide range of styles, from the plain and unadorned to the epigrammatic. They cover topics drawn from both public and private life, and in each case the essays cover their topics systematically from a number of different angles, weighing one argument against another. A much-enlarged second edition appeared in 1612 with 38 essays. Another, under the title *Essayes or Counsels, Civill and Morall*, was published in 1625 with 58 essays. Translations into French and Italian appeared during Bacon's lifetime.

## Critical reception

Though Bacon considered the *Essays* “but as recreation of my other studies”, he was given high praise by his contemporaries, even to the point of crediting him with having invented the essay form.<sup>[3][4]</sup> Later researches made clear the extent of Bacon’s borrowings from the works of Montaigne, Aristotle and other writers, but the *Essays* have nevertheless remained in the highest repute.<sup>[5][6]</sup> The 19th century literary historian Henry Hallam wrote that “They are deeper and more discriminating than any earlier, or almost any later, work in the English language”.<sup>[7]</sup>

## Aphorisms

Bacon’s genius as a phrase-maker appears to great advantage in the later essays. In “Of Boldness” he wrote, “If the Hill will not come to Mahomet, Mahomet will go to the hill”, which is the earliest known appearance of that proverb in print.<sup>[8]</sup> The phrase “hostages to fortune” appears in the essay “Of Marriage and Single Life” – again the earliest known usage.<sup>[9]</sup> Aldous Huxley’s book *Jesting Pilate* took its epigraph, “What is Truth? said jesting Pilate; and would not stay for an answer”, from Bacon’s essay “Of Truth”. The 1999 edition of *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* includes no fewer than 91 quotations from the *Essays*.

## Contents listing

The contents pages of Thomas Markby’s 1853 edition list the essays and their dates of publication as follows:

1. Of Truth (1625)
2. Of Death (1612, enlarged 1625)
3. Of Unity in Religion/Of Religion (1612, rewritten 1625)
4. Of Revenge (1625)
5. Of Adversity (1625)
6. Of Simulation and Dissimulation (1625)
7. Of Parents and Children (1612, enlarged 1625)
8. Of Marriage and Single Life (1612, slightly enlarged 1625)
9. Of Envy (1625)
10. Of Love (1612, rewritten 1625)
11. Of Great Place (1612, slightly enlarged 1625)
12. Of Boldness (1625)
13. Of Goodness and Goodness of Nature (1612, enlarged 1625)
14. Of Nobility (1612, rewritten 1625)
15. Of Seditions and Troubles (1625)
16. Of Atheism (1612, slightly enlarged 1625)
17. Of Superstition (1612, slightly enlarged 1625)
18. Of Travel (1625)
19. Of Empire (1612, much enlarged 1625)
20. Of Counsels (1612, enlarged 1625)
21. Of Delays (1625)
22. Of Cunning (1612, rewritten 1625)
23. Of Wisdom for a Man’s Self (1612, enlarged 1625)
24. Of Innovations (1625)

25. Of Dispatch (1612)
26. Of Seeming Wise (1612)
27. Of Friendship (1612, rewritten 1625)
28. Of Expense (1597, enlarged 1612, again 1625)
29. Of the True Greatness of Kingdoms and Estates (1612, enlarged 1625)
30. Of Regimen of Health (1597, enlarged 1612, again 1625)
31. Of Suspicion (1625)
32. Of Discourse (1597, slightly enlarged 1612, again 1625)
33. Of Plantations (1625)
34. Of Riches (1612, much enlarged 1625)
35. Of Prophecies (1625)
36. Of Ambition (1612, enlarged 1625)
37. Of Masques and Triumphs (1625)
38. Of Nature in Men (1612, enlarged 1625)
39. Of Custom and Education (1612, enlarged 1625)
40. Of Fortune (1612, slightly enlarged 1625)
41. Of Usury (1625)
42. Of Youth and Age (1612, slightly enlarged 1625)
43. Of Beauty (1612, slightly enlarged 1625)
44. Of Deformity (1612, somewhat altered 1625)
45. Of Building (1625)
46. Of Gardens (1625)
47. Of Negotiating (1597, enlarged 1612, very slightly altered 1625)
48. Of Followers and Friends (1597, slightly enlarged 1625)
49. Of Suitors (1597, enlarged 1625)
50. Of Studies (1597, enlarged 1625)
51. Of Faction (1597, much enlarged 1625)
52. Of Ceremonies and Respects (1597, enlarged 1625)
53. Of Praise (1612, enlarged 1625)
54. Of Vain Glory (1612)
55. Of Honour and Reputation (1597, omitted 1612, republished 1625)
56. Of Judicature (1612)
57. Of Anger (1625)
58. Of Vicissitude of Things (1625)
59. A Fragment of an Essay of Fame
60. Of the Colours of Good and Evil



**Essay Questions****1. Write an essay on Bacon as an essayist with reference to “Of Youth and Age.”  
(or)****Give a critical appreciation of Bacon’s essay “Of Youth and Age.”**

Lord Francis Bacon is the Father of English prose. His book entitled *Essays* passed through three distinct stages of evolution, represented by the editions of 1597, 1612, and 1625. The first edition had only ten essays and the second edition had thirty-eight essays. He revised his essays thoroughly and the third edition of his book had fifty-eight essays. This book enjoyed great popularity from the day of issue. Its pregnancy of the thought and the pithiness of the style rendered it an epoch-making one. It soon acquired the status of a world-book. For it is “more cosmopolitan than patriotic, adapted not to an age but all time. Its appeal is universal and permanent. Hence Saintsbury describes Bacon’s *Essays* as “works of prose art.”

Bacon enumerates the advantages and disadvantages of the young and the old in the essay “Of Youth and Age.” According to him, the young have these merits or advantages. Their creative power reaches the highest stage of development. They get a sort of divine inspiration. They are imaginative, bold, adventurous and energetic. Their morality is much greater than that of the old. For they are guided by principles and not by expediency. They see visions unlike the old who dream dreams. Hence they are nearer to God than the old. They also have the following defects. They are immature, impetuous, reckless and reluctant to own their mistakes. They do not retrace their steps even after landing themselves in difficult situations. Hence their mistakes prove costly. They are comparable to an untrained horse.

Bacon describes the merits and demerits of the old as follows. They are cautious, wise, ripe in judgement. Their mistakes are not so harmful and costly as those of the young. They also have some serious defects also. They are hesitant, slow, and given to grumbling and fault-finding. They are guided more by expediency than by principles or morality. Hence their morality is inferior to that of the young. And so they are farther from God than the young.

Hence Bacon recommends the mixing of the young and the old to discharge public duties. That is, he recommends a sort of team-work of the young and the old. When they work together, the young will be the learners. And the old will be the actors (doers). The old will exercise authority, the young will get favour and popularity. They will rectify the faults of each other and profit by the merits of each other.

Bacon’s “Of Youth and Age” is a typical essay. Its style is remarkable for its brevity and pregnancy of meaning. It is highly figurative and allusive. There are a good number of similes such as “Generally, youth is like the first cogitations, not so wise as the second.” Bacon’s style is highly allusive. He refers to many historical figures such as Julius Caesar, Octavius (Augustus) Caesar, Cosmus, Duke of Florence, Hermogenes, Hortensius, and Scipio Africanus. These references show his grip over history. The reader should have sufficient knowledge of them in order to appreciate Bacon’s point in referring to them. Besides, he gives a number of quotations which include “Your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams,” “*Juventutem egit erroribus, imo furoribus, plenam,*” “*Ultima primis cedebant.*” To sum up, the appeal of this essay is universal and eternal. It is indeed a work of prose art.



**ON JUDICIOUS FLATTERY**

Sir Richard Steele (1672-1729)

AN old acquaintance, who met me this morning, seemed overjoyed to see me, and told me I looked as well as he had known me do these forty years : “but,” continued he, “not quite the man you were, when we visited together at Lady Brightly’s. Oh! Isaac, those days are over. Do you think there are any such fine creatures now living, as we then conversed with?” He went on with a thousand incoherent circumstances, which, in his imagination, must needs please me; but they had quite the contrary effect. The flattery with which he began, in telling me how well I wore, was not disagreeable; but his indiscreet mention of a set of acquaintance we had out-lived, recalled ten thousand things to my memory, which made me reflect upon my present condition with regret. Had he indeed been so kind as, after a long absence, to felicitate me upon an indolent and easy old age; and mentioned how much he and I had to thank for, who at our time of day could walk firmly, eat heartily, and converse cheerfully, he had kept up my pleasure in myself. But of all mankind, there are none so shocking as these injudicious civil people. They ordinarily begin upon something that they know must be a satisfaction; but then, for fear of the imputation of flattery, they follow it with the last thing in the world of which you would be reminded. It is this that perplexes civil persons. The reason that there is such a general outcry among us against flatterers is, that there are so very few good ones. It is the nicest art in this life, and is a part of eloquence which does not want the preparation that is necessary to all other parts of it, that your audience should be your well-wishers; for praise from an enemy is the most pleasing of all commendations. It is generally to be observed, that the person most agreeable to a man for a constancy is he that has no shining qualities, but is a certain degree above great imperfections; whom he can live with as his inferior, and who will either overlook, or not observe his little defects. Such an easy companion as this either now and then throws out a little flattery, or lets a man silently flatter himself in his superiority to him. If you take notice, there is hardly a rich man in the world, who has not such a led friend of small consideration, who is a darling for his insignificancy. It is a great ease to have one in our own shape a species below us, and who, without being listed in our service, is by nature of our retinue. These dependants are of excellent use on a rainy day, or when a man has not a mind to dress; or to exclude solitude, when one has neither a mind to that or to company. There are of this good-natured order, who are so kind as to divide themselves, and do these good offices to many. Five or six of them visit a whole quarter of the town, and exclude the spleen, without fees, from the families they frequent if they do not prescribe physic, they can be company when you take it. Very great benefactors to the rich, or those whom they call people at their ease, are your persons of no consequence. I have known some of them, by the help of a little cunning, make delicious flatterers. They know the course of the town, and the general characters of persons; by this means they will sometimes tell the most agreeable falsehoods imaginable. They will acquaint you, that such a one of a quite contrary party said, “That though you were engaged in different interests, yet he had the greatest respect for your good sense and address.” When one of these has a little cunning, he passes his time in the utmost satisfaction to himself and his friends; for his position is never to report or speak a displeasing thing to his friend. As for letting him go on in an error, he knows, advice against them is the office of persons of greater talents and less discretion. The Latin word for a flatterer, *assentator*, implies no more than a person, that barely consents; and indeed such a one if a man were able to purchase or maintain him, cannot be bought too dear. Such a one never contradicts you; but gains upon you, not by a

fulsome way of commending you in broad terms, but liking whatever you propose or utter; at the same time, is ready to beg your pardon, and gainsay you, if you chance to speak ill of yourself. An old lady is very seldom without such a companion as this, who can recite the names of all her lovers, and the matches refused by her in the days when she minded such vanities, as she is pleased to call them, though she so much approves the mention of them. It is to be noted that a woman's flatterer is generally elder than herself; her years serving at once to recommend her patroness's age, and to add weight to her complaisance in all other particulars. We gentlemen of small fortunes are extremely necessitous in this particular. I have indeed one who smokes with me often; but his parts are so low, that all the incense he does me is to fill his pipe with me, and to be out at just as many whiffs as I take. This is all the praise or assent that he is capable of ; yet there are more hours when I would rather be in his company than in that of the brightest man I know. It would be a hard matter to give an account of this inclination to be flattered; but if we go to the bottom of it, we shall find, that the pleasure in it is something like that of receiving money which we lay out. Every man thinks he has an estate of reputation, and is glad to see one that will bring any of it home to him. It is no matter how dirty a bag it is conveyed to him in, or by how clownish a messenger, so the money be good. All that we want, to be pleased with flattery, is to believe that the man is sincere who gives it us. It is by this one accident, that absurd creatures often outrun the most skilful in this art. Their want of ability is here an advantage ; and their bluntness, as it is the seeming effect of sincerity, is the best cover to artifice. Terence introduces a flatterer talking to a coxcomb, whom he cheats out of a livelihood ; and a third person on the stage makes on him this pleasant remark, "This fellow has an art of making fools madmen." The love of flattery is, indeed, sometimes the weakness of a great mind; but you see it also in persons, who otherwise discover no manner of relish of any thing above mere sensuality. These latter it sometimes improves ; but always debases the former. A fool is in himself the object of pity, until he is flattered. By the force of that, his stupidity is raised into affectation, and he becomes of dignity enough to be ridiculous. I remember a droll, that upon one's saying, "The times are so ticklish, that there must great care be taken what one says in conversation"; answered with an air of surliness and honesty, "If people will be free, let them be so in the manner that I am, who never abuse a man but to his face." He had no reputation for saying dangerous truths; therefore when it was repeated, "You abuse a man but to his face?" "Yes," says he, "I flatter him." It is indeed the greatest of injuries to flatter any but the unhappy, or such as are displeased with themselves for some infirmity. In this latter case we have a member of our club, who, when Sir Jeffery falls asleep, wakens him with snoring. This makes Sir Jeffery hold up for some moments the longer, to see there are men younger than himself among us, who are more lethargic than he is. When flattery is practised upon any other consideration, it is the most abject thing in nature; nay, I cannot think of any character below the flatterer, except he that envies him. You meet with fellows prepared to be as mean as possible in their condescensions and expressions; but they want persons and talents to rise up to such a baseness. As a coxcomb is a fool of parts, so is a flatterer a knave of parts. The best of this order, that I know, is one who disguises it under a spirit of contradiction or reproof. He told an arrant driveller the other day, that he did not care for being in company with him, because he heard he turned his absent friends into ridicule. And upon Lady Autumn's disputing with him about something that happened at the Revolution, he replied with a very angry tone, "Pray, madam, give me leave to know more of a thing in which I was actually concerned, than you who were then in your nurse's arms."

### About the Author

**Sir Richard Steele**, English essayist, playwright, and statesman, who founded and contributed frequently to the influential 18<sup>th</sup> century journal the *Spectator*.

Steele was born in March 1672 in Dublin and educated at the University of Oxford. He entered the army in 1694 and during his term of military service wrote three comic dramas, *The Funeral* (1701), *The Lying Lover* (1703), which ran for only six nights, and *The Tender Husband* (1705). In 1707 Steele was appointed by the English statesman Robert Harley, 1st Earl of Oxford, to edit the *London Gazette*, an official government publication.

On April 12, 1709, Steele brought out, under the pseudonym of Isaac Bickerstaff, the first issue of *The Tatler*, a triweekly journal featuring essays and brief sketches on politics and society. In addition to his own essays, Steele published in the *The Tatler* a number of papers by the English essayist Joseph Addison, whom he had met during his school days and who became an important colleague and friend. This publication was succeeded on March 1, 1711, by the more famous *The Spectator* with both Steele and Addison as contributors. Many of the ideas for articles were Steele's, with Addison filling in the details and polishing the prose. Perhaps the best-known portion of *The Spectator* comprises a series of essays known as the Sir Roger de Coverley papers, which, in the person of a kindly and eccentric old country gentleman, present an idealized portrait of the 18th-century English squire. This character was conceived by Steele and named after an old English dance. When the last issue of *The Spectator* appeared on December 6, 1712, Steele had contributed 236 papers and Addison 274. Steele's next journalistic venture, the *Guardian*, started in 1713, lasted for 176 issues, and was succeeded by several periodicals, notably *The Englishman* (1713).

In these later undertakings, Steele, an ardent Whig, involved himself in violent controversy with the Tories, who then controlled the government. He entered Parliament as a Whig but was expelled in 1714 on the charge of having committed seditious libel in his pamphlet *The Crisis*, in which he advocated the succession to the British throne of the pro-Whig elector of Hanover, later King George I. Political disagreements tore apart the friendship of Addison and Steele in 1718. After the death of Queen Anne and the accession of George I later that year, Steele was re-elected to Parliament, knighted, and made a justice of the peace, surveyor of the royal stables, and governor of the Theatre Royal of Drury Lane. There his last and most successful comedy, *The Conscious Lovers*, was produced in 1722. Steele's taste for good living kept him in continuous financial difficulty. In 1724, because of heavy debts, he retired to Wales. He died there on September 1, 1729.

### Essay Questions

#### **1. What are the views of Richard Steele on flattery?**

Richard Steele was a popular essayist of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. He started periodicals such as the *Tatler*, the *Spectator* and the *Guardian*. He had the full cooperation of Addison, who contributed many essays to them. In the essay "On Judicious Flattery" he states his views on flattery as follows.

One morning, a certain man who was courteous but injudicious met him. He told him that he remained the same for fifty years without being affected by age. He praised his dress but indiscreetly recalled a set of acquaintance, whom they had outlived. This

recollection made Steele think of his present condition with regret. He regards him as an example of injudicious civil people.

Flattery is the nicest art in life. It is a part of eloquence. It does not want the preparation that is necessary to all other parts of eloquence. The audience of a flatterer should be his well-wishers. For praise from an enemy is the most pleasing of all praises.

An agreeable flatterer is one who has no shining qualities, but must be above great imperfections. He should be inferior to the man whom he flatters. He should be inferior to the man whom he flatters. He should be an easy companion. He should throw out a little flattery or all him silently flatter himself in his superiority to him. He becomes a sort of dependant and proves very useful on a rainy day or when a man is not inclined to go out or to remain alone. We find many such people in society. They visit a whole quarter of the town. They exclude the bad temper from the families they visit, without fees. They are great benefactors to the rich. They tell the most agreeable falsehoods imaginable. They tell you that such a one of a quite opposite party had the greatest respect for your good sense and address. This pleases you very much. Some of them never report or speak a displeasing thing to their friends. They never point out the errors of their friends. They think that it is the duty of persons of greater talents and less discretion.

A good flatterer never contradicts you, but gains upon you, not by praising you in broad terms, but liking whatever you propose or utter. At the same time, he is ready to contradict you apologetically when you speak ill of yourself.

We are all inclined to be flattered. The pleasure of flattery is something like that of receiving money which we lay out. Everyone thinks that he has an estate of reputation, and is glad to see one that will bring any of it home to him. It doesn't matter how dirty the bag is in which it is conveyed to him, or how clownish the messenger is who brings it. All that we want is to believe that the man who gives it is sincere. Because of this, absurd creatures often surpass the most skilful in the art of flattery. Their want of ability proves to be an advantage. Their bluntness seems to be an effect of sincerity and covers their artifice.

Terence, the great Latin comic writer, introduces a flatterer talking to a coxcomb (fop). The flatterer cheats him out of a livelihood. A third person on the stage remarks, "This fellow has an art of making great mind." It is also seen in persons who are merely sensual.

The best of the flatterers is one who disguises flattery under a spirit of contradiction or reproof. Such a one told an arrant driveller the other day, that he did not care for being in company with him, because he turned his absent friends into ridicule. And when Lady Autumn disputed with him about something that happened at the Revolution, he angrily asked her to give him permission to know more of a thing in which he was actually concerned than she who was then in her nurse's arms.



**DREAM CHILDREN: A REVERIE**

Charles Lamb (1775-1834)

Children love to listen to stories about their elders, when they were children; to stretch their imagination to the conception of a traditionary great-uncle, or grandame, whom they never saw. It was in this spirit that my little ones crept about me the other evening to hear about their great-grandmother Field, who lived in a great house in Norfolk (a hundred times bigger than that in which they and papa lived) which had been the scene--so at least it was generally believed in that part of the country--of the tragic incidents which they had lately become familiar with from the ballad of the Children in the Wood. Certain it is that the whole story of the children and their cruel uncle was to be seen fairly carved out in wood upon the chimney-piece of the great hall, the whole story down to the Robin Redbreasts, till a foolish rich person pulled it down to set up a marble one of modern invention in its stead, with no story upon it. Here Alice put out one of her dear mother's looks, too tender to be called upbraiding. Then I went on to say, how religious and how good their great-grandmother Field was, how beloved and respected by every body, though she was not indeed the mistress of this great house, but had only the charge of it (and yet in some respects she might be said to be the mistress of it too) committed to her by the owner, who preferred living in a newer and more fashionable mansion which he had purchased somewhere in the adjoining county; but still she lived in it in a manner as if it had been her own, and kept up the dignity of the great house in a sort while she lived, which afterwards came to decay, and was nearly pulled down, and all its old ornaments stripped and carried away to the owner's other house, where they were set up, and looked as awkward as if some one were to carry away the old tombs they had seen lately at the Abbey, and stick them up in Lady C.'s tawdry gilt drawing-room. Here John smiled, as much as to say, "that would be foolish indeed." And then I told how, when she came to die, her funeral was attended by a concourse of all the poor, and some of the gentry too, of the neighbourhood for many miles round, to show their respect for her memory, because she had been such a good and religious woman; so good indeed that she knew all the Psalter by heart, ay, and a great part of the Testament besides. Here little Alice spread her hands. Then I told what a tall, upright, graceful person their great-grandmother Field once was; and how in her youth she was esteemed the best dancer--here Alice's little right foot played an involuntary movement, till, upon my looking grave, it desisted--the best dancer, I was saying, in the county, till a cruel disease, called a cancer, came, and bowed her down with pain; but it could never bend her good spirits, or make them stoop, but they were still upright, because she was so good and religious. Then I told how she was used to sleep by herself in a lone chamber of the great lone house; and how she believed that an apparition of two infants was to be seen at midnight gliding up and down the great staircase near where she slept, but she said, "those innocents would do her no harm;" and how frightened I used to be, though in those days I had my maid to sleep with me, because I was never half so good or religious as she--and yet I never saw the infants. Here John expanded all his eye-brows and tried to look courageous. Then I told how good she was to all her grand-children, having us to the great-house in the holydays, where I in particular used to spend many hours by myself, in gazing upon the old busts of the Twelve Caesars, that had been Emperors of Rome, till the old marble heads would seem to live again, or I to be turned into marble with them; how I never could be tired with roaming about that huge mansion, with its vast empty rooms, with their worn-out hangings, fluttering tapestry, and carved oaken pannels, with the gilding almost rubbed out--sometimes in the spacious old-fashioned gardens,

which I had almost to myself, unless when now and then a solitary gardening man would cross me--and how the nectarines and peaches hung upon the walls, without my ever offering to pluck them, because they were forbidden fruit, unless now and then,--and because I had more pleasure in strolling about among the old melancholy-looking yew trees, or the firs, and picking up the red berries, and the fir apples, which were good for nothing but to look at--or in lying about upon the fresh grass, with all the fine garden smells around me--or basking in the orangery, till I could almost fancy myself ripening too along with the oranges and the limes in that grateful warmth--or in watching the dace that darted to and fro in the fish-pond, at the bottom of the garden, with here and there a great sulky pike hanging midway down the water in silent state, as if it mocked at their impertinent friskings,--I had more pleasure in these busy-idle diversions than in all the sweet flavours of peaches, nectarines, oranges, and such like common baits of children. Here John slyly deposited back upon the plate a bunch of grapes, which, not unobserved by Alice, he had meditated dividing with her, and both seemed willing to relinquish them for the present as irrelevant. Then in somewhat a more heightened tone, I told how, though their great-grandmother Field loved all her grand-children, yet in an especial manner she might be said to love their uncle, John L----, because he was so handsome and spirited a youth, and a king to the rest of us; and, instead of moping about in solitary corners, like some of us, he would mount the most mettlesome horse he could get, when but an imp no bigger than themselves, and make it carry him half over the county in a morning, and join the hunters when there were any out--and yet he loved the old great house and gardens too, but had too much spirit to be always pent up within their boundaries--and how their uncle grew up to man's estate as brave as he was handsome, to the admiration of every body, but of their great-grandmother Field most especially; and how he used to carry me upon his back when I was a lame-footed boy--for he was a good bit older than me--many a mile when I could not walk for pain;--and how in after life he became lame-footed too, and I did not always (I fear) make allowances enough for him when he was impatient, and in pain, nor remember sufficiently how considerate he had been to me when I was lame-footed; and how when he died, though he had not been dead an hour, it seemed as if he had died a great while ago, such a distance there is betwixt life and death; and how I bore his death as I thought pretty well at first, but afterwards it haunted and haunted me; and though I did not cry or take it to heart as some do, and as I think he would have done if I had died, yet I missed him all day long, and knew not till then how much I had loved him. I missed his kindness, and I missed his crossness, and wished him to be alive again, to be quarrelling with him (for we quarreled sometimes), rather than not have him again, and was as uneasy without him, as he their poor uncle must have been when the doctor took off his limb. Here the children fell a crying, and asked if their little mourning which they had on was not for uncle John, and they looked up, and prayed me not to go on about their uncle, but to tell them some stories about their pretty dead mother. Then I told how for seven long years, in hope sometimes, sometimes in despair, yet persisting ever, I courted the fair Alice W--n; and, as much as children could understand, I explained to them what coyness, and difficulty, and denial meant in maidens--when suddenly, turning to Alice, the soul of the first Alice looked out at her eyes with such a reality of re-presentment, that I became in doubt which of them stood there before me, or whose that bright hair was; and while I stood gazing, both the children gradually grew fainter to my view, receding, and still receding till nothing at last but two mournful features were seen in the uttermost distance, which, without speech, strangely impressed upon me the effects of speech; "We are not of Alice, nor of thee, nor are we children at all. The children of Alice called Bartrum father. We are nothing; less than



nothing, and dreams. We are only what might have been, and must wait upon the tedious shores of Lethe millions of ages before we have existence, and a name"--and immediately awaking, I found myself quietly seated in my bachelor arm-chair, where I had fallen asleep, with the faithful Bridget unchanged by my side--but John L. (or James Elia) was gone for ever.

- The End -

### **About the Author**

**Charles Lamb**, (pen name **Elia**), English essayist, famed for his simple, personal reflections on commonplace life with touches of fantastic humour and pathos.

Lamb was born in London and educated at Christ's Hospital. One of his schoolmates was the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, with whom he formed a lifelong friendship. From 1792 until his retirement on pension in 1825, Lamb was a clerk in the accounting department of East India House, London. In 1796 Lamb's sister Mary Ann Lamb, seized by temporary homicidal mania, killed their invalid mother. To prevent his sister from being committed to an insane asylum, Lamb had himself appointed her guardian and, despite his own unstable mental health, cared for her for the rest of his life.

Lamb's literary career included the writing of poetry, plays, and literary criticism. The perennially popular *Tales Founded on the Plays of Shakespeare*, later entitled *Tales from Shakespeare*, a retelling of the plays for children, was written in collaboration with his sister and appeared in 1807. Lamb's reputation as a critic was established by his *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets who Lived about the Time of Shakespeare* (1808). His most important literary work, however, consists of the essays he contributed to the *London Magazine* between 1820 and 1825 under the pseudonym Elia; they were published in book form as *Essays of Elia* (1823) and *Last Essays of Elia* (1833). Lamb, a brilliant conversationalist, was one of a circle of important contemporary writers that included Coleridge, William Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt, Robert Southey, and William Wordsworth. Lamb's literary criticism was often perceptive and original. He had a particular gift for analysing character and his sensitivity and perceptiveness made him a valuable critic and friend. Some of his best writings were in letters to his friends.

### **Essay Questions**

#### **1. Write a note on the element of pathos and humour in Lamb's "Dream Children."**

In the history of English literature, Lamb occupied a prominent place as an essayist and critic. His name is mainly associated with his personal and autobiographical essays. In the words of Cazamian,

The essay, a form which provides Lamb with his favourite mode of expression becomes in his hands the artificial but precious instrument of a constant self-revelation.

Lamb in his *Essays of Elia* reveals to us his sweetness of heart, pathos, humour, and his day-to-day experience in life. E.V. Lucas aptly says,

The essays of Lamb are 'amusing, paradoxical, ingenious, touching and eloquent'.

“Dream Children” is one of the most popular essays of Lamb. It is highly moving, heart-rending and imbued with the tragedy of his life. It is a reverie because it contains a fanciful or imaginary account. Of his talk, with the children whom he never had and who, therefore, have been called ‘Dream Children’. Alice and John are the imaginary offspring of his imaginary marriage with Anne Simons whom he had loved in his youth but who had not responded to his love. Pathos is the key note of this essay. The following passage exhibits the pathetic note.

Here the children fell a crying, and asked if their little mourning which they had on was not for uncle John, and they looked up, and prayed me not to go on about their uncle but to tell them some stories about their pretty dead mother. Then I told how for seven long years, in hope, sometimes, sometimes in despair, yet persisting ever, I courted the fair Alice W-n.

In these lines Lamb tells the children about the pathetic death of John Lamb.

After a while, the children began to cry and requested their father not to tell them anything more about uncle John but to tell them about their pretty dead mother. Then Lamb told them how for sever long years he had courted the fair Alice W-n. Sometimes in hope and sometimes in despair. As Lamb gazed at his children, he found both of them gradually grew fainter and then receded till he could see nothing but two sad features which appeared to be saying, “We are not Alive, nor of thee, nor are we children at all. We are only what might have been.” This is the climax of pathos. We are deeply touched by the utter frustration of Lamb’s hopes of a conjugal life and the joys of having a family.

This essay is full of reminiscences and anecdotes. Lamb recalls the lonely life of his grandmother and then goes on to recall his memories of his own early boyhood and recollections of his brother John. The retrospective character of this essay is, therefore, clearly seen. He liked to chew the cud of memory. It is for this reason he had been called ‘a visualizer of memories’. Hugh Walker rightly observes:

The ‘essays’ of Lamb are largely autobiographical, they deal with mankind at large as seen through the medium of Lamb’s own experiences and impressions.

## 2. Write a critical appreciation of Lamb’s “Dream Children.”

“Dream Children” is one of the most popular essays of Charles Lamb. It is a beautiful prose piece that is full of humour, pathos, and autobiographical significance. It reveals Lamb’s remarkable knowledge of child behaviour. According to Mark Hunter,

There is, perhaps, in the whole of Charles Lamb’s writings nothing so entirely beautiful, nothing so unmistakably the product of genius as this masterpiece of imaginative prose.

Lamb's two imaginary children Alice and John came to him one evening to listen to the story of his past. Lamb began to narrate the story with a reference to their great-grandmother Field. He gave the following account of Field.

Field lived in a great house in Norfolk. That house had been the scene of the tragic incidents related by the ballad of the children in the Wood. She was a very religious woman. She was beloved and respected by everybody. She maintained the beauty and dignity of the house, though she was not its owner. When she died, her funeral was attended by the poor as well as the gentry. She knew all the Psalter by heart and a great deal of the New Testament. In her youth, she was a tall, upright and graceful person. She was regarded as the best dancer. She was very kind to her grandchildren. She was particularly fond of John Lamb, brother of Charles Lamb. She died of cancer.

After giving the above account of Field, Charles Lamb gave his imaginary children the account of his brother John Lamb. John Lamb was a handsome and spirited youth. He was a king of all the youngsters. He could ride the most spirited horse even when he was a boy. He grew up to be a very handsome man and won the admiration of everybody. He used to carry Charles upon his back for many miles when Charles was lame-footed. After some years he became lame-footed. The doctor took off his limb. he died an untimely death. Charles Lamb missed him very much.

Lamb's imaginary children cried when he described how the doctor took off their uncle's limb. They asked him to tell them about their pretty dead mother. So he began to narrate the story of his love for their mother. As he narrated, they grew fainter and receded. They seemed to tell him that they were not children at all. Charles Lamb woke up from his dream and realised that they were after all his dream children.

ON LYING IN A BED (1909)

G.K. Chesterton (1874-1936)

Lying in bed would be an altogether perfect and supreme experience if only one had a coloured pencil long enough to draw on the ceiling. This, however, is not generally a part of the domestic apparatus on the premises. I think myself that the thing might be managed with several pails of Aspinall and a broom. Only if one worked in a really sweeping and masterly way, and laid on the colour in great washes, it might drip down again on one's face in floods of rich and mingled colour like some strange fairy rain; and that would have its disadvantages. I am afraid it would be necessary to stick to black and white in this form of artistic composition. To that purpose, indeed, the white ceiling would be of the greatest possible use; in fact, it is the only use I think of a white ceiling being put to.

But for the beautiful experiment of lying in bed I might never have discovered it. For years I have been looking for some blank spaces in a modern house to draw on. Paper is much too small for any really allegorical design; as Cyrano de Bergerac says, "*Il me faut des géants*" ["I need giants"]. But when I tried to find these fine clear spaces in the modern rooms such as we all live in I was continually disappointed. I found an endless pattern and complication of small objects hung like a curtain of fine links between me and my desire. I examined the walls; I found them to my surprise to be already covered with wallpaper, and I found the wallpaper to be already covered with uninteresting images, all bearing a ridiculous resemblance to each other. I could not understand why one arbitrary symbol (a symbol apparently entirely devoid of any religious or philosophical significance) should thus be sprinkled all over my nice walls like a sort of small-pox. The Bible must be referring to wallpapers, I think, when it says, "Use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles do." I found the Turkey carpet a mass of unmeaning colours, rather like the Turkish Empire, or like the sweetmeat called Turkish Delight. I do not exactly know what Turkish Delight really is; but I suppose it is Macedonian Massacres. Everywhere that I went forlornly, with my pencil or my paint brush, I found that others had unaccountably been before me, spoiling the walls, the curtains, and the furniture with their childish and barbaric designs.

.....

Nowhere did I find a really clear space for sketching until this occasion when I prolonged beyond the proper limit the process of lying on my back in bed. Then the light of that white heaven broke upon my vision, that breadth of mere white which is indeed almost the definition of Paradise, since it means purity and also means freedom. But alas! like all heavens, now that it is seen it is found to be unattainable; it looks more austere and more distant than the blue sky outside the window. For my proposal to paint on it with the bristly end of a broom has been discouraged—never mind by whom; by a person debarred from all political rights—and even my minor proposal to put the other end of the broom into the kitchen fire and turn it to charcoal has not been conceded. Yet I am certain that it was from persons in my position that all the original inspiration came for covering the ceilings of palaces and cathedrals with a riot of fallen angels or victorious gods. I am sure that it was only because Michael Angelo was engaged in the ancient and honourable occupation of lying in bed that he ever realized how the roof of the Sistine Chapel might be made into an awful imitation of a divine drama that could only be acted in the heavens.

The tone now commonly taken toward the practice of lying in bed is hypocritical and unhealthy. Of all the marks of modernity that seem to mean a kind of decadence, there is

none more menacing and dangerous than the exultation of very small and secondary matters of conduct at the expense of very great and primary ones, at the expense of eternal ties and tragic human morality. If there is one thing worse than the modern weakening of major morals, it is the modern strengthening of minor morals. Thus it is considered more withering to accuse a man of bad taste than of bad ethics. Cleanliness is not next to godliness nowadays, for cleanliness is made essential and godliness is regarded as an offence. A playwright can attack the institution of marriage so long as he does not misrepresent the manners of society, and I have met Ibsenite pessimists who thought it wrong to take beer but right to take prussic acid. Especially this is so in matters of hygiene; notably such matters as lying in bed. Instead of being regarded, as it ought to be, as a matter of personal convenience and adjustment, it has come to be regarded by many as if it were a part of essential morals to get up early in the morning. It is upon the whole part of practical wisdom; but there is nothing good about it or bad about its opposite.

.....

Misers get up early in the morning; and burglars, I am informed, get up the night before. It is the great peril of our society that all its mechanisms may grow more fixed while its spirit grows more fickle. A man's minor actions and arrangements ought to be free, flexible, creative; the things that should be unchangeable are his principles, his ideals. But with us the reverse is true; our views change constantly; but our lunch does not change. Now, I should like men to have strong and rooted conceptions, but as for their lunch, let them have it sometimes in the garden, sometimes in bed, sometimes on the roof, sometimes in the top of a tree. Let them argue from the same first principles, but let them do it in a bed, or a boat, or a balloon. This alarming growth of good habits really means a too great emphasis on those virtues which mere custom can ensure, it means too little emphasis on those virtues which custom can never quite ensure, sudden and splendid virtues of inspired pity or of inspired candour. If ever that abrupt appeal is made to us we may fail. A man can get used to getting up at five o'clock in the morning. A man cannot very well get used to being burnt for his opinions; the first experiment is commonly fatal. Let us pay a little more attention to these possibilities of the heroic and unexpected. I dare say that when I get out of this bed I shall do some deed of an almost terrible virtue.

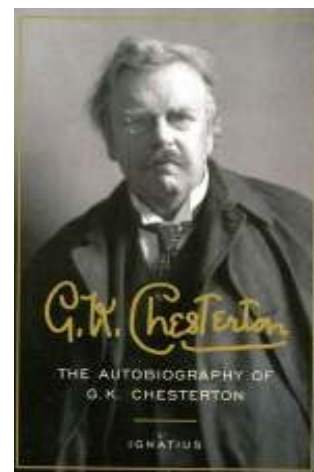
For those who study the great art of lying in bed there is one emphatic caution to be added. Even for those who can do their work in bed (like journalists), still more for those whose work cannot be done in bed (as, for example, the professional harpooners of whales), it is obvious that the indulgence must be very occasional. But that is not the caution I mean. The caution is this: if you do lie in bed, be sure you do it without any reason or justification at all. I do not speak, of course, of the seriously sick. But if a healthy man lies in bed, let him do it without a rag of excuse; then he will get up a healthy man. If he does it for some secondary hygienic reason, if he has some scientific explanation, he may get up a hypochondriac.

-- The End --



### About the Author

**G(ilbert) K(eith) Chesterton**, an English writer was born in London. Although originally a liberal in his philosophy, he later became a conservative. He formed a lasting friendship with the writer Hilarie Belloc, also a conservative, and the two men established a journal to expound their views. He also illustrated Belloc's novels. Despite his controversial views, Chesterton's brilliant, vigorous, and witty style made him extremely popular. He did not become a Roman Catholic until 1922, but nearly all his works are defences of Roman Catholicism and orthodoxy in general.



Among Chesterton's more important writings are theological studies, polemics, and volumes of poetry. Today he is perhaps most famous for his novels *The Napoleon of Notting Hill* (1904), a political fantasy which reflected his dislike of the modern, mechanized world and celebrated an earlier pre-industrialized world, and *The Man Who Was Thursday* (1908), a witty allegory, and for a series of detective stories relating the adventures of Father Brown, a mild-mannered Roman Catholic sleuth. He also wrote works of criticism on Dickens, Blake, Robert Browning, Chaucer, and George Bernard Shaw.

### A Brief Analysis of the Essay

In this short essay, G.K. Chesterton is able to display his absolute understanding of human nature. He explains this nature through humor and wit in this particular essay, *On Lying in Bed*. According to this essay, Chesterton has developed three parts to human nature. The first part is that items that are desired by humans can often be found in unusually normal places. The second part is that humans have begun to aggrandize trivial morals and to debase major morals. The final part to his outlook on human nature is that the lives of humans have become exceedingly mechanical. These are the topics explained by G.K. Chesterton in this essay.

Chesterton begins his essay by discussing his idea that items longed for by humans can be found in normal places. He does this in the essay by describing his pursuit of a perfect space to paint. He states that he looks on walls, paper, and several other places. His search, however, comes to end in the most normal of places, the ceiling above his bed. In the essay he realizes that he has found his object of desire in a rather ordinary place.

In a similar way, people in today's society can find their desires in places that are rather customary. We, however, are not looking for a place to paint. In the many items we covet, many can be found in regular locations. Frequently, we look in unusual places for these items, when they are actually located directly 'under our nose.'

### Essay Questions

#### **1. What are the reflections of G.K. Chesterton in his essay "On Lying in Bed"?**

G.K. Chesterton is a modern essayist. His essays abound in paradoxes and humour. "On Lying in Bed" is one of his popular and typical essays. In this essays, he reflects on lying in bed as follows.

Lying in bed becomes a perfect and supreme experience if one has coloured pencil long enough to draw on the ceiling. Such a pencil is not generally a part of our domestic apparatus. Instead of the pencil, several pails of Aspinall (a kind of paint) and a broom

may be used. One should use it in a really sweeping and masterly way. Otherwise it might drip down again on one's face in floods of rich mingled colour like some strange fairy rain. That would have its disadvantages. It will be better to stick to black and white when one is lying on bed and painting the ceiling. The white ceiling is very suitable to that purpose. In fact, that is the only purpose of the white ceiling.

The beautiful experiment of lying in bed has made the author realise the suitability of the ceiling for painting. For several years he has not understood why one arbitrary symbol should be sprinkled all over nice walls like a kind of small-pox. The Bible must be referring to well-papers. "Use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles do." The Turkey carpet is like the Turkish Empire or like the sweetmeat called Turkish Delight. The author sorrowfully goes with his pencil to paint brush to a number of places to paint. But everywhere he finds that others have already spoiled the walls, the curtains and the furniture with their childish and uncivilized designs.

The author's proposal to paint on the ceiling as been discouraged by a person debarred from all political rights. Even his other minor proposal to put the other end of the broom into the kitchen fire and turn it into charcoal has been rejected. He is certain that it was from persons lying in bed that all the original inspiration came for covering the ceilings of palaces and cathedrals with fallen angels or victorious gods. There is no doubt that Michael Angelo, the great Italian painter, must have been lying in bed when he realised how the roof of the Sistine Chapel, the chapel of the Pope in the Victorian, might be made into an awful imitation of a divine drama that could be acted in the heavens.

Nowadays very small and secondary matters of conduct are exalted at the expense of eternal ties and tragic human morality. This is unfortunate and undesirable. Besides, major morals are weakened and minor morals are strengthened. Thus, it is considered more damaging to accuse a man of bad taste than of bad ethics. Cleanliness is not next to godliness nowadays since cleanliness is made an essential, and godliness is regarded as an offence. A dramatist can criticise the institution of marriage so long as he does not misrepresent the manners of the society. There are many Ibsenite pessimists (those who follow the ideas of Ibsen, Norwegian dramatist and poet) who think it wrong to take beer but right to take prussic acid. Especially this is so in matters of hygiene, notably such matters as lying in bed. This (lying in bed) is only a matter of personal convenience and adjustment. But getting up early in the morning is regarded by many as if it were an essential moral. Misers get up early in the morning. Can we regard them as men of morality because of that? A man's minor actions and arrangements ought to be free, flexible and creative. His principles and ideals should be unchangeable. But unfortunately the reverse is happening today. Our views change constantly and our lunch does not change at all. In other words, what should not change is changing, and what may change is not changing.

Seriously sick people may lie in bed. If a healthy man lies in bed, let him do it without any excuse, then he will get up a healthy man. If he does it for any reason of health, if he has some scientific explanation, he may get up in a state of depression.

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**Unit 4 (A) – Fiction: Origin and Development of the Novel**

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**Origin of the Novel in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century**

Novel is a fictional prose narrative in which characters and situations are depicted within the framework of a plot. It constitutes the third stage in the development of imaginative fiction, following the epic and the romance, which it largely absorbed but never quite displaced. Etymologically the word 'novel' has come from Italian *novella* (storia) which means 'new' story, and also from Latin *Novellus* which means 'slightly new.' It had its birth, with its associations of newness and originality, in the eighteenth century. Before that there had been forms of long and continuous narrative prose, but it was only in the 1720s one see the emergence of a recognisable 'novel' form. It is concerned with the realistic depiction of middle class life, values and experience, and showing the development of individual characters.

The growth of economic/possessive individualism, the growth of new mercantile capitalist values of investment and capital accumulation, the rise of materialistic philosophical individualism, the emphasis on the individual, rather than social groups, as the essential social unit, the new demand for education/moral training are some of the causes for the growth of the 'novel.'

As the novel became increasingly popular during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, writers examined society with greater depth and breadth. They wrote revealingly about people living within, or escaping from, the pressures of society. Criticism was implicit of characters attempting to ignore society and its conventions, and of society for failing to satisfy human aspirations.

Five men of the 18th century—Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding, Tobias Smollett, and Laurence Sterne—wrote the first classic British novels and set high standards and models for later work in the form. In *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1747-1748), written in the form of letters exchanged between lovers, friends, and kinsmen, Richardson brought to a traditional theme of the older romances—a young woman's defence of her chastity—a psychological realism still unsurpassed. Fielding, in *Joseph Andrews* (1742), *Tom Jones* (1749), and *Amelia* (1751), depicted contemporary life and morals with a generosity combined with great classical learning, enabling him to write what he called "comic epic." Smollett's *Roderick Random* (1748) followed a picaresque hero against a vivid panorama of lower-class society. *The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker* (1771), also by Smollett, was gentler in its social criticism, but the comedy is merciless in its depiction of human foibles and vanities. Between 1759 and 1767 Sterne turned the novel inside out with his comic masterpiece *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, in which the hero, who is the narrator, is not born until halfway through the book. Sterne had no real successors until James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, who investigated the relations between life on the one hand and literature and language on the other.

Many categories of the novel became recognizable in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, although they were rarely self-contained or mutually exclusive. One was the didactic novel, in which theories of education and politics were expressed. Most famous was the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emilee; ou, Traité de l'éducation* (1762). A British didactic novel was *Caleb Williams* (1794), by the political philosopher William Godwin; this work may also be seen as an example of the Gothic novel, in which the element of horror is created by the use of apparitions, supernatural manifestations, chains, dungeons, tombs, and nature in its more terrifying aspects. The first Gothic novel was Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). Later examples are Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796), and Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818). Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland; or, The Transformation* (1798) was the first American Gothic novel. The Gothic strain has been potent in fiction ever since.

One of the most enduring genres in the British novel—uncommon in American fiction—is the comedy of manners, which is concerned with the clash, mirrored in speech and behaviour, between characters formed by particular cultural and social conditions. Perhaps the first writer in the genre was Fanny Burney (*Evelina*, 1778; *Cecilia*, 1782), but the great exemplar was Jane Austen (*Pride and Prejudice*, 1813; *Emma*, 1816). Her abiding theme is ostensibly that of young women securing, or not securing, husbands; her underlying serious concern is with the attainment of self-knowledge. Such are Austen's wit, irony, and psychological perception, allied with her strict sense of correct social behaviour, that she is the unchallenged genius of the genre.

### The Picaresque Novel

The Picaresque novel originated in Spain. The term 'Picaresque' is derived from the Spanish 'pícaro' meaning an 'anti-hero,' 'rogue,' and 'rascal.' A picaresque novel is generally an autobiographical account of hero's fortunes, sufferings and wanderings. It is a combination of episodic tales arranged as journeys. These episodes generally depict low life in a rambling manner and come to an abrupt ending.

The first prose fiction in the nature of the picaresque was John Lyly's 'Euphues' published in 1578 detailing the loves and adventures of a young Athenian called Euphues. Six years later, Thomas Nash published his *Unfortunate Traveller*, a more perfect picaresque romance dealing with the travels and adventures of a page called Jacke Wilton. Defoe's *Moll Flanders* published in 1722 had affinity with the picaresque mode of writing. But Smollett's *The Adventures of Ferdinand Count Fathom* is a more perfect form of the picaresque. However, it was Fielding's *Tom Jones* which established the respectability of the picaresque novel. Fielding's novel describes through eighteen books the adventures and several love affairs of the young anti-hero Tom Jones. Elements of the picaresque can be found in Dickens' *Nicholas Nickleby* and in Joyce Cary's *The Horse's Mouth*.

The object of the picaresque novel is to take a central figure through a succession of scenes and adventures, introduce a great number of characters around him and thus build up a picture of society. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century and before travel was the only way to get acquainted with social life. That is why heroes in the picaresque novels are travelling heroes. The hero in a picaresque novel is always in the whirlpool of adventures and he has to be present in several human situations. The picaresque hero often transcends the level of the rogue into a tragic figure with human attributes as in the case of Fielding's *Tom Jones*.

Another feature of the picaresque novel is the dynamic movement of the hero. He should run through a succession of scenes as Tom does during his journey to London. The novelist constructs the picture of society through the narration of the hero's wanderings. Smollett sends his hero Roderick Random not only to London but also to France and for a ship journey. The picaresque novel may go deeper into a contemplation of the more intricate relationship between good and evil. They also reveal the strange truth that generous impulses exist even in those whom society considers as rogues. Tom Jones is a generous and manly youth in spite of the roguish elements in his character.



### Point of View in Fiction

Point of View in fiction is the position from which the story is narrated. There are basically two narratives namely *first person point of view* and *third person point of view*. In the first person point of view 'I' is telling the story. The camera lens is firmly behind the narrating character's eyes, and the reader only sees what the narrating character sees, knows what the narrating character knows, and so on. The narrator is usually the main character or the protagonist. However, it may also enables the writer to enter into the intimacy of his protagonist's mind and betray its most secret thoughts and experiences. But in this form the thoughts and experiences of other characters remain a conjecture to the author. The other advantages of first person point of view is that there will be an immediacy and intimacy between the reader and the protagonist. It is easier to share the protagonist's thoughts, feelings, and emotions.

Third person point of view gives the author licence to omniscience. The narrator describes the characters' actions by saying, 'he,' 'she,' and 'they' (whereas in the first person point of view the action is described by saying 'I' and 'We'). The narrator knows everything that needs to be known about the agents, actions, and events. He has privileged access to the characters' thoughts, feelings, and motives. He is free to move at will in time and place. He is one who not only reports, but also comments on and evaluates the actions and motives of the characters. Sometimes he expresses his personal views about human life in general. Most of the novelists have adopted this method because it is more natural and it enables the author to be objective.

Besides the above said there is a *second person point of view*. In this mode the story gets told solely, as an address by the narrator to someone he calls by the second-person pronoun 'you.' This form of narration occurred in occasional passages of traditional fiction. But it has been exploited in a sustained way only during the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and then only rarely.

### The Epistolary Novel

The Epistolary Novel is a fictitious narrative in the form of letters. In such a novel the author poses as the editor of the letters that have somehow come to his possession. The first epistolary novel in English appeared in 1678. It was a translation from Portuguese called *Portuguese Letters*. Even though several fictional writings in letter form appeared during the Restoration period, the most outstanding was Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*. In fact Richardson was the first master of this form. Later, Smollett wrote *Humphrey Clinker* in the letter form. Fanny Burney's famous novel *Evelina* was also epistolary. Another famous epistolary novel of that period was Goethe's *Werther* translated into several European languages.

Though the epistolary novel has an impressive instance and psychological truth it suffers from certain disadvantages. It cannot have lengthy dialogue and only limited number of correspondents can be included. It employs a unique point of view, that is, it is written in the form of letters between characters. The letter can be to the person involved in the action, or to a third person. All the action happens off-stage, as it were, and the reader only hears about it afterwards as it is relayed in the correspondence. Richardson made the epistolary novel didactic; it was a manual of manners and decorum.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Swinburne wrote his *Love's Cross Currents* in the letter form. Epistolary style had been partially attempted by Scott in his *Red Gauntlet*. In the modern times E.M. Forster made use of this style partially in his novel *Howards End*. Two other novels in which epistolary style is partially used are Henry Green's *Blindness* and Saul Bellow's *Herzog*. Christopher Isherwood's *A Meeting by the River* is also written in the epistolary style. As the novel developed into a complex literary form with several stylistic manifestations, the epistolary style has become unpopular.

### The Historical Novel

The historical novel is one of the important branches of fiction. It attempts to convey the spirit, manners and social conditions of a past age with realistic details and nearly perfect fidelity to historical facts. The subject matter may compass both public and private events. The protagonist may be an actual historical figure or an invented figure. The historical novel combines the dramatic interest of plot and character with a more or less detailed picture of the varied features of life of a particular age. The most important feature of the historical novel is its vivid reproduction of the life of a bygone age. Historians like Gibson in their works record various facts in the past but historical novelists, as Harold Orel in his thought provoking book, *The Historical Novel* (Macmillan 1995) rightly observes,

The writers of historical novels in their works make well crafted, intelligent recreations of past eras.

Gibson's *Rise And Fall of Roman Empire* is a book of history that deals with the events that took place in Rome in the past. The first great historical novel in English was Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley* that published in 1814. Scott's *Ivanhoe*, *The Talisman*, and Robert Louis Stevenson's *Prince Otto* are typical historical novels.

In a historical novel the novelist makes a lively presentation of the ways, manners and customs of the past. He also presents, with his fecund imagination, lively historical figures. He has to reconcile the claims of history and art. Here the real historical characters are relegated to the background and the characters of fiction invented by the novelist's imagination gain a prime of place. In the words of Saintsbury:

In a historical novel, the hero is usually an imaginary individual who has felt life more intensely or touched greater heights of experience than others and is in some way connected with the historical events. Actual facts of history are mixed up with stories of love and war in order to display knowledge of human nature and the complexity of life.

Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* comes before us as a typical representative of the Saxons. The tradition of the historical novel continued into the Victorian Age. Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*, Thackeray's *The History of Henry Esmond Esquire*, George Eliot's *Romola* are the important historical novels of the Victorian period. In Gidwani's *The Sword of Tippu Sultan*, Tippu Sultan is a warrior who fought against colonial rule to win freedom.

David Davidar's *The House of Blue Mangoes* (January, 2002, Viking) is a powerful novel that depicts the story of the Dorai family and its three generations of people. It is a historical novel but runs like an allegory.

### Aspects of the Novel

*Aspects of the Novel* is a book compiled from a series of lectures delivered by E. M. Forster at Trinity College, Cambridge in 1927, in which he discussed the English language novel. By using examples from classic texts, he highlights the seven universal aspects of the novel: story, characters, plot, fantasy, prophecy, pattern, and rhythm.

#### **Story**

A story is a narrative of events arranged in their time sequence — it simply tells us what happened and in what order. It is the time sequence which turns a random collection of episodes into a story. But chronological sequence is a very primitive feature and it can have only one merit: that of making the audience want to know what happens next. The only skill of a storyteller is their ability to wield the weapon of suspense, making the audience eager to discover the next event in the sequence.

This emphasis on chronological sequence is a difference from real life. Our real lives also unfold through time but have the added feature that some experiences have greater value and meaning than others. Value has no role in a story, which is concerned with the life in time rather than the life by values. And because human lives measured by time consist of nothing more than the business of getting old, a story cannot sincerely lead to any conclusion but the grave.

The basis of a novel is a story — the narration of events in the order they happened — but storytelling alone can never produce a great novel. The simple chronological narrative of **War and Peace** only manages to achieve some kind of greatness because it has extended over space as well as time, and the sense of space until it terrifies us is exhilarating, and leaves behind it an effect like music. After one has read **War and Peace** for a bit, great chords begin to sound, and we cannot exactly say what struck them. They come from the immense area of Russia, over which episodes and characters have been scattered, from the sum-total of bridges and frozen rivers, forests, roads, gardens, fields, which accumulate grandeur and sonority after we have passed them.

#### **Character**

A novelist can only begin to explore the value of human experiences by developing the characters of the story. But Forster emphasises that characters are not real people; rather they are **like** real people. Characters' lives are different from real lives, and common activities such as sleeping and eating occupy little space in novels, whereas love is greatly over-represented. Sometimes characters can seem to be more real than the people around us, and this is because a novelist is able to reveal the character's hidden life. In daily life we never understand each other, neither complete clairvoyance nor complete confessional exists. But people in a novel can be understood completely by the reader, if the novelist wishes; their inner as well as their outer life can be exposed. We cannot understand each other, except in a rough and ready way; we cannot reveal ourselves, even when we want to; what we call intimacy is only makeshift; perfect knowledge is an illusion. But in the novel we can know people perfectly.

It is this completeness that allows characters to take on the air of being real, and gives us a definition as to when a character in a book is real: it is real when the novelist knows everything about it. He may not tell us all he knows, but he will give us the feeling that though the character has not been explained, it is explicable.

Forster distinguishes between flat characters and round characters. The really flat character can be expressed in one sentence such as 'I will never desert Mr Micawber.' There is Mrs Micawber — she says she won't desert Mr Micawber; she doesn't, and there she is. These characters are easily recognised when first introduced and easily remembered afterwards, and their memorability appeals to our yearning for permanence. They are best when they are comic. A serious or tragic flat character is apt to be a bore.

Dickens wrote flat characters superbly well. Nearly every one can be summed up in a sentence, and yet there is this wonderful feeling of human depth. Probably the immense vitality of Dickens causes his characters to vibrate a little, so that they borrow his life and appear to lead one of their own. It is a conjuring trick. Part of the genius of Dickens is that he does use types and caricatures, people whom we recognize the instant they re-enter, and yet achieves effects that are not mechanical and a vision of humanity that is not shallow.

A round character by contrast has further dimensions to their personality, which are revealed as events demand them. A flat character never surprises us with their behaviour, but a round character may well surprise us with these unsuspected aspects of their nature; and the test of a round character is whether it is capable of surprising in a convincing way. Even if events never require these characters to extend themselves, they nevertheless have the capacity. All the Jane Austen characters are ready for an extended life, for a life which the scheme of her books seldom requires them to lead, and that is why they lead their actual lives so satisfactorily.

Looking back to a fictional technique common in eighteenth and nineteenth century novels — that of telling different sections of the story through different characters — Forster believes the effect of changing viewpoint is less important than the power of the writer to bounce the reader into accepting what he says and having a proper mixture of characters.

### **Plot**

We have defined a story as a narrative of events arranged in their time-sequence. A plot is also a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality. 'The king died and then the queen died,' is a story. 'The king died, and then the queen died of grief,' is a plot. The time sequence is preserved, but the sense of causality overshadows it. Consider the death of the queen. If it is in a story we say 'and then?' If it is in a plot we ask 'why?'

A plot demands intelligence and memory on the part of the reader, to remember incidents and create connecting threads between them. This allows the novelist to delay explanations and introduce human mystery to the narrative. Mystery is essential to a plot, and cannot be appreciated without intelligence, part of the mind must be left behind, brooding, while the other part goes marching on.

This relationship between cause and effect also connects the characters with the plot. Incident springs out of character, and having occurred it alters that character. People and events are closely connected. The balance between them is sometimes difficult to achieve though, because characters, to be real, ought to run smoothly, but a plot ought to cause surprise. Sometimes a plot triumphs too completely. The characters have to suspend their natures at every turn, or else are so swept away by the course of Fate that our sense of their reality is weakened.



## **Fantasy and Prophecy**

The general tone of novels is so literal that when the fantastic is introduced it produces a special effect. Fantasy implies the supernatural, but it may do this by no more than simply hinting through a magical quality in events. The stuff of daily life will be tugged and strained in various directions, the earth will be given little tilts mischievous or pensive.

Forster includes parodies and adaptations of earlier works as forms of fantasy which allow another writer's imagination to take flight. Parody or adaptation have enormous advantages to certain novelists, particularly to those who may have a great deal to say and abundant literary genius, but who do not see the world in terms of individual men and women — who do not, in other words, take easily to creating characters.

Prophecy is an accent in the novelist's voice. His theme is the universe, or something universal. The characters and events still have a specific meaning within the story, but they also have greater resonances. In Dostoyevsky the characters and situations always stand for more than themselves; infinity attends them.

This is different from symbolism, in which characters and events represent concrete meanings. Rather prophecy is about mysterious, imprecise meanings which connect us with the history of humankind. It is not a veil, it is not an allegory. It is the ordinary world of fiction, but it reaches back. Melville — after the initial roughness of his realism — reaches straight back into the universal, to a blackness and sadness so transcending our own that they are undistinguishable from glory.

## **Pattern and Rhythm**

A novel has a pattern when it has a geometric shape, such as the hour-glass shape of one character's social fall crossing over with another's social climb, or the circular shape of a character moving from one new acquaintance to the next until they finally return to their starting point. Pattern is an aesthetic aspect of the novel, and though it may be nourished by anything in the novel — any character, scene, word — it draws most of its nourishment from the plot. Whereas the story appeals to our curiosity and the plot to our intelligence, the pattern appeals to our aesthetic sense, it causes us to see the book as a whole.

But forcing the characters to fit an external pattern, instead of allowing the plot to grow organically, causes a novel to lose the immense richness of material which life provides. To most readers of fiction the sensation from a pattern is not intense enough to justify the sacrifices that made it, and their verdict is 'Beautifully done, but not worth doing.'

Rhythm on the other hand is like a musical motif which reappears with slight variations and helps to unify the novel. Such a motif has a life of its own, unconnected with the lives of its auditors. It is almost an actor, but not quite, and that 'not quite' means that its power has gone towards stitching [the] book together from the inside.

The appearance of a motif is not an artificial pattern, and there are times when it means nothing and is forgotten, and this seems to me the function of rhythm in fiction; not to be there all the time like a pattern, but by its lovely waxing and waning to fill us with surprise and freshness and hope. I doubt that it can be achieved by the writers who plan their books beforehand, it has to depend on a local impulse when the right interval is reached. But the effect can be exquisite, it can be obtained without mutilating the characters, and it lessens our need of an external form.

### The Novel of Character

The “novel of character” or “psychological novel” is a work of fiction in which the thoughts, feelings, and motivations of the characters are of equal or greater interest than the external action of the narrative. It is for this reason, some critics have called it as “the novel of ‘inner man’.” In the novel of character, it is on the protagonist’s motives for what he or she does, and on how the protagonist as a person will turn out.

In a psychological novel the emotional reactions and internal states of the characters are influenced by and in turn trigger external events in a meaningful symbiosis (a mutually beneficial relationship). The credit for having written the first English *Novel of Character* is almost unanimously given to Samuel Richardson for his *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740). *Pamela* is the story of a sentimental but shrewd young woman who, by prudently safeguarding her beleaguered chastity, succeeds in becoming the wife of a wild young gentleman instead of his debauched servant girl. Although an overtly character’s psychological approach is found among the earliest English novels, such as Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela* (1740), which is told from the heroine’s point of view, and Laurence Sterne’s introspective first-person narrative *Tristram Shandy* (1759–67), the psychological novel reached its full potential only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Its development coincided with the growth of psychology and the discoveries of Sigmund Freud. But it was not necessarily a result of this. The penetrating insight into psychological complexities and unconscious motivations in the works of Fyodor Dostoyevsky and Leo Tolstoy, the detailed recording of external events’ impingement on individual consciousness as practiced by Henry James, the associative memories of Marcel Proust, the stream-of-consciousness technique of James Joyce and William Faulkner, and the continuous flow of experience of Virginia Woolf were each arrived at independently.

In the psychological novel, plot is subordinate to and dependent upon the probing delineation of character. Events may not be presented in chronological order but rather as they occur in the character’s thought associations, memories, fantasies, reveries, contemplations, and dreams. For instance, the action of Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922) takes place in Dublin in a 24-hour period, but the events of the day evoke associations that take the reader back and forth through the characters’ past and present lives.

### The Growth of Realism in Fiction

Realism is applied by literary critics in two different ways. One is to identify a movement in the writing of novels during the 19<sup>th</sup> century that included Balzac in France, George Eliot in England, and W.D. Howells in America. The second is to designate a recurrent mode, in various eras and literary forms, of representing human life and experience in literature.

The growth of economic/possessive individualism, the growth of new mercantile capitalist values of investment and capital accumulation, the rise of materialistic philosophical individualism, the emphasis on the individual, rather than social groups, as the essential social unit, the new demand for education/moral training are some of the causes for the growth of the 'realism in the novel.'

In fact, a key concern in terms of the development of the eighteenth century novel is the recurring preoccupation with realism, and realistic depiction of society. This is seen in the works of Daniel Defoe and Henry Fielding. Daniel Defoe dealt with the extraordinary adventures of a shipwrecked mariner named Robinson Crusoe in his novel. Henry Fielding too with the extraordinary misadventures of a woman named Moll Flanders depicted the society. They attempted to make their works as realistic as possible, whether by using first person narration as in Moll Flanders and Robinson Crusoe, or by relying on Aristotelean notions of "mimesis." They also made their novels seem to readers a mirror held up to reality by their reportorial manner of rendering all the events, whether ordinary or extraordinary.

An alternative tactic was to use epistolary form, most notably in the works of Richardson, or to use consciously anti-romance forms as a means of asserting the realism of their writing. The predecessor here had been Cervantes, in his anti-romance, and the tradition continues in *Middlemarch*, where George Eliot uses phrases such as the "home epic" as a means of affirming the value of the presentation of ordinary experience. One way of asserting the value of the new novel technique was to show how its fidelity to the "real" was more accurate than earlier forms, such as romance, chronicle, fable.

Related also was the issue of **moral purpose**. Eighteenth century novel torn between the demand not to offend, to teach, and yet also to be realistic. Novel writing from this point onwards tied to the moral demands of a middle class readership and their account of low life.

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Unit 4 (B) – Novel Prescribed

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**PRIDE AND PREJUDICE**

Jane Austen (1775-1817)

**About the Author**

**Jane Austen** is the major English novelist whose elegant, satirical, and witty fiction was highly influential in the development of the novel.

**Life**

Austen was born near Basingstoke, in the parish of Steventon, of which her father was rector. Jane was the youngest of seven children. The family was cultivated and prosperous, although not rich. Austen's great uncle was the Master of Balliol College, Oxford University, and her father, himself an accomplished scholar, taught her at home and encouraged her reading and her writing. She and her sister were sent briefly to the Abbey School in Reading. Austen acquired the standard accomplishments of young ladies of her class and time: she learnt French and Italian, could draw and sing well, and embroidered; she is recorded as having been "especially great in satin-stitch". Less conventionally, she read widely and particularly enjoyed the novels of Henry Fielding, Laurence Sterne, Samuel Richardson, and Fanny Burney, and the poetry of George Crabbe and William Cowper. In the summer, she would take part in private theatricals in a barn near the family home.

Her family was a lively and happy one. Of her five brothers, two became admirals and two clergymen, and another inherited the property and took the name of a second cousin, Mr. Knight. Austen's only sister, Cassandra, died unmarried in her 70s in 1845. It was to Cassandra that Austen wrote many of her letters when one of them had made an occasional visit to an uncle at Bath, or to London, to visit one of their brothers. Cassandra drastically edited these letters after Jane's death, taking out all mentions of romantic interests or personal problems. It is known, however, that Austen had several suitors and once accepted a proposal of marriage, only to reconsider and reject it the following morning. It is also thought that she met a gentleman at Lyme with whom she developed a close relationship, and that they might have become engaged, but he died very suddenly. Like her sister, Austen died unmarried.

Austen was described by a contemporary as "a clear brunette with a rich colour, hazel eyes, fine features, and curling brown hair". Henry Austen, in the *Biographical Notice* that was published posthumously with *Persuasion* (1818), remarked: "Of personal attractions she possessed a considerable share. Her stature was that of true elegance". She was fond of children, and they of her, and some of her most engaging letters were written to her nephews and nieces.

Austen started writing fiction very young; *Love and Friendship* was written when she was only 14 years old, *A History of England* ("by a partial, prejudiced, and ignorant historian") when she was 15, and *A Collection of Letters* and *Lesley Castle* around the age of 16. *Lady Susan* is also an early work. In her early 20s she wrote the sketches *Elinor and Marianne*, and *First Impressions*. Her father offered *First Impressions* to a publisher in 1797 who rejected it by return of post, without reading it. Undeterred, Jane Austen rewrote *Elinor and Marianne* in 1797-1798, and renamed it *Sense and Sensibility*. *Northanger Abbey* was written immediately afterwards, in 1798-1799.

After this flurry of literary activity, there seems to have been a pause. Until she was 25 Jane lived at Steventon, but in 1801 the family moved to Bath. In 1803, *Northanger Abbey* was sold to the publishers Crosby and Sons for £10 but they did not publish it. Later, the firm was happy to sell the manuscript back to her brothers for £10, unaware that it was the work of the famous Jane Austen. Jane spent some weeks at Lyme in 1804, and it is thought that she began *The Watsons* the same year, although it was never finished, and she probably abandoned it upon her father's death in 1805. The remaining family members moved to Southampton and then in 1809 they moved again to a cottage in Chawton, in Hampshire, on the property of her brother, Mr. Knight. The death of her father and the relocation of the family may account for the lack of literary output during these years. In 1809, Jane revised *Sense and Sensibility* once again, and at around the same time *First Impressions* was reworked and renamed *Pride and Prejudice*. *Sense and Sensibility* was published in 1811, and *Pride and Prejudice* in 1813.

In 1811, at Chawton, Austen began a second period of intense productivity. She wrote her novels sitting in the busy family parlour. She embarked first upon *Mansfield Park* (1814), then *Emma* (1816); *Persuasion*, her last finished novel, was published posthumously in 1818, with *Northanger Abbey*. She started another novel, *Sanditon*, in 1817, but was never to finish it.

Austen's work was immediately well received, and in 1815, Sir Walter Scott praised it highly in the *Quarterly Review*; this would have been gratifying to Austen, since she was a great admirer of Scott's *Waverley* novels. The Prince Regent kept a set of her works in each of his residences, and in 1815, when Austen was in London nursing her brother through an illness, the Prince Regent sent his chaplain, Mr Clarke, to show her Carlton House, and also requested that she dedicate her next novel to him. Despite her strong disapproval of his moral character, she dutifully and "most respectfully" dedicated *Emma* to the Prince. Her work was also admired by the poets Robert Southey and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Although her novels were published anonymously, their authorship was an open secret to her family and friends. At her death, the four of her novels which had been published had already made more than £700, a reasonably large sum at that time, although she never became rich as a result of her writing.

From 1816 onward, Austen's health had not been good, and in May 1817 she moved from Chawton to Winchester so that she could be closer to Mr Lyford, a well-known doctor. Her health declined badly, and she was nursed by her sister Cassandra, and attended upon by two of her brothers who were clergymen in the area. It has since been suggested that she died of what is now known as Addison's disease, and it is recorded by her family that she suffered the pain and physical decline with great courage and cheerfulness. She died quietly on July 18, 1817 and was buried in Winchester Cathedral.

### Literary Achievement

Austen's six finished novels represent an extraordinary achievement and an important development in the history of the English novel. To her nephew, J. Edward Austen, she was self-deprecating about her work, writing of "the little bit (two Inches wide) of Ivory on which I work with so fine a brush, as produces little effect after much labour", and to her niece, Anna Austen, she announced "3 or 4 families in a Country Village is the very thing to work on". Yet there is nothing limited about her novels. Sir Walter Scott wrote in 1815, "the big bow-wow strain I can do myself like any now going; but the exquisite touch which renders ordinary common-place things and characters interesting from the truth of the



description and the sentiment is denied to me". Austen turned her back on the Gothic novel form, of which an example is *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, first published in 1818, the same year as *Persuasion* and Austen's own satire of the Gothic form, *Northanger Abbey*. Instead, eschewing melodramatic plot contrivances and supernatural interventions, Austen wrote domestic fiction, putting the dynamics of human relationships into a sharp and often critical focus.

### Early Work

Her early novels, *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*, she later criticized as too brilliant and light, but they remain her best-loved and funniest books. *Sense and Sensibility* tells the story of Elinor, with her "strength of understanding" and "coolness of judgement", and her younger sister, Marianne, whose "excess of ... sensibility" leads her to respond with imprudent haste to the romantic overtures of Mr Willoughby, only to discover her mistake too late and fall into inconsolable grief and illness. Her sister, Elinor, meanwhile, is repressing with effort her own love for Edward Ferrars. The book is at once a high-paced comedy and a serious examination of a society which unfairly requires women to perform in public while simultaneously maintaining strict limits of privacy. Elinor hides her feelings, Marianne displays hers, and both are thoroughly unhappy as a result.

*Pride and Prejudice*, a similarly high-spirited book, which chronicles the fortunes of the five Bennet sisters and their marital prospects, opens with the famous line: "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife." This is typical of Austen's authorial voice, which she uses to comment wryly on the conduct of her characters, and indeed, on the values of society itself. Henry Austen, in his *Biographical Notice*, wrote: "Everything came finished from her pen; for on all subjects she had ideas as clear as her expressions were well chosen"; and brilliance of finish, poise, and elegance indeed characterize her use of language throughout her writing. Austen's novels are often described as "witty", but hers is not a superficial or facile wit: it is rather a wit which penetrates the depths of human character, and then surfaces again with a finely turned phrase that records everything seen there.

*Northanger Abbey* is a romping satire on the Gothic novel form which opens: "No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy, would have supposed her born to be a heroine." Catherine comes from a thoroughly happy, healthy family which shows no signs whatsoever of the "Romantic" decline or tragedy which conventionally mark the earliest years of a Gothic heroine. Nevertheless, Catherine reads so many spine-chilling Gothic horror stories that she begins to see mysteries everywhere, until Henry Tilney has to remind her, "Remember the country and the age in which we live. Remember that we are English, that we are Christians. Consult your own understanding, your own sense of the probable." Catherine has been so busy constructing her own fantastic fictions, that she has ceased to notice the real, ordinary drama that is playing around her.

### Later Work

The later three novels are less sparkling and the narrative is slower and more reflective. In *Mansfield Park*, Austen succeeds in representing a larger and more various collection of characters and locations than in her earlier work. At one level the book is a protracted love story played out between Fanny Price, the poor niece and protégé of Sir Thomas Bertram, and her cousin Edmund. Fanny, a quiet and serious girl, watches with pain Edmund's fascination with the worldly and attractive Mary Crawford, who has arrived from London

with her brother to stay in the area. At another level, though, the book explores difficult contemporary issues, such as the influence of environment over character, and it also rehearses some of the conflicts caused by the rapid social change from an agricultural to an urban-based economy at the time Austen was writing.

*Emma*, which followed it, is a similarly mature work. Emma Woodhouse is “handsome, clever, and rich” but has “a disposition to think a little too well of herself”. The novel minutely charts the development of Emma’s moral character, from egotistical arrogance and insensitivity to a better understanding of the responsibilities which accompany her social power. Austen’s control of the reader in *Emma* is quite astonishing. While making the reader like Emma, she also makes all her faults clear, and the reader can see Emma walking into trouble, while Emma herself cannot. *Emma* is a technical *tour de force*, and also includes some of Austen’s most memorable comic characters, such as Emma’s hypochondriac father, Mr Woodhouse.

*Persuasion* is Austen’s last finished novel, although she did not have time to make her usual scrupulous revisions to it. It is undoubtedly the saddest of her books: in the unfinished *Sanditon*, which she started to write after *Persuasion*, it seems that she intended to return to a buoyant, satirical mood. It has been suggested that *Persuasion* was written in memory of the young man Austen had hoped to marry, and the novel’s tone is certainly elegiac. The heroine, Anne Elliot, is introduced not as the “very pretty girl” that she had been a few years before, but as a woman, whose “bloom had vanished early”. A love story involving Anne and Captain Wentworth which comprises “six years of separation and suffering” is the subject of the book, and even the conventional happy ending does little to alleviate the sense of disappointment and longing which permeates its pages. Its intimacy and depth make it arguably the finest of Austen’s novels.

In both her letters and her fiction, Austen displayed a profound understanding of human motivations, a sharp and flexible intelligence, and also, importantly, a very human sympathy. Although some criticisms have been levelled at her (Charlotte Brontë, for instance, found her work lacking in passion), she has maintained a consistently strong readership and has been elevated to cult status by some critics. Such critics tend to read her work as feminine and genteel, but there has been a more recent wave of criticism which has pointed to Austen’s vicious portrayals of a society which represses women, and looked at the ways in which she explores issues of class, economics, and social change in her work.

### **A Brief Summary of *Pride and Prejudice***

*Pride and Prejudice*, novel by British author Jane Austen, who is known for her witty and insightful domestic comedies concerning the lives of middle-class women in late 18th- and early 19th-century England.

When Austen was in her early 20s she sketched out *First Impressions*, and her father offered it to a publishing house, Cadell, in 1797; it was rejected unread. Austen later reworked the novel, in around 1809, renaming it *Pride and Prejudice*, and it was eventually published in 1813, two years after *Sense and Sensibility*, another early work.

*Pride and Prejudice* opens with one of the most famous lines in English literature: “It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in need of a wife.” The novel thus begins by detailing the ambitions of the foolish Mrs Bennet to find a good husband, or at least a husband with a good fortune, for each of her five daughters. The arrival in the village of Charles Bingley and his mysterious, aloof friend

Darcy heightens her hopes. The eldest Bennet daughter, Jane, falls in love with Bingley, but his snobbish sisters and Darcy effect the separation of the pair, leaving Jane desolate. Darcy, though attracted to Elizabeth, is too aware of how far below his social class the Bennets are. When he overcomes his pride and proposes marriage, Elizabeth rejects him out of hand on account of his attitude and for his apparent ill-treatment of an officer named Wickham who has befriended the Bennets. However, Wickham's true nature is exposed when he elopes with Elizabeth's youngest sister, Lydia, exposing the girl and her family to public disgrace. Darcy tracks the villain down, forces him to marry Lydia, and ensures the couple's financial security. Darcy's actions overcome Elizabeth's prejudices, and finally assured of his good character, she accepts him, and the two marry. Bingley once again pays court to Jane, and they too are united.

### **Plot Overview**

The News that a Wealthy Young Gentleman named Charles Bingley has rented the manor of Netherfield Park causes a great stir in the nearby village of Longbourn, especially in the Bennet household. The Bennets have five unmarried daughters—from oldest to youngest, Jane, Elizabeth, Mary, Kitty, and Lydia—and Mrs. Bennet is desperate to see them all married. After Mr. Bennet pays a social visit to Mr. Bingley, the Bennets attend a ball at which Mr. Bingley is present. He is taken with Jane and spends much of the evening dancing with her. His close friend, Mr. Darcy, is less pleased with the evening and haughtily refuses to dance with Elizabeth, which makes everyone view him as arrogant and obnoxious.

At social functions over subsequent weeks, however, Mr. Darcy finds himself increasingly attracted to Elizabeth's charm and intelligence. Jane's friendship with Mr. Bingley also continues to burgeon, and Jane pays a visit to the Bingley mansion. On her journey to the house she is caught in a downpour and catches ill, forcing her to stay at Netherfield for several days. In order to tend to Jane, Elizabeth hikes through muddy fields and arrives with a spattered dress, much to the disdain of the snobbish Miss Bingley, Charles Bingley's sister. Miss Bingley's spite only increases when she notices that Darcy, whom she is pursuing, pays quite a bit of attention to Elizabeth.

When Elizabeth and Jane return home, they find Mr. Collins visiting their household. Mr. Collins is a young clergyman who stands to inherit Mr. Bennet's property, which has been "entailed," meaning that it can only be passed down to male heirs. Mr. Collins is a pompous fool, though he is quite enthralled by the Bennet girls. Shortly after his arrival, he makes a proposal of marriage to Elizabeth. She turns him down, wounding his pride. Meanwhile, the Bennet girls have become friendly with militia officers stationed in a nearby town. Among them is Wickham, a handsome young soldier who is friendly toward Elizabeth and tells her how Darcy cruelly cheated him out of an inheritance.

At the beginning of winter, the Bingleys and Darcy leave Netherfield and return to London, much to Jane's dismay. A further shock arrives with the news that Mr. Collins has become engaged to Charlotte Lucas, Elizabeth's best friend and the poor daughter of a local knight. Charlotte explains to Elizabeth that she is getting older and needs the match for financial reasons. Charlotte and Mr. Collins get married and Elizabeth promises to visit them at their new home. As winter progresses, Jane visits the city to see friends (hoping also that she might see Mr. Bingley). However, Miss Bingley visits her and behaves rudely, while Mr. Bingley fails to visit her at all. The marriage prospects for the Bennet girls appear bleak.

That spring, Elizabeth visits Charlotte, who now lives near the home of Mr. Collins's patron, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, who is also Darcy's aunt. Darcy calls on Lady Catherine and encounters Elizabeth, whose presence leads him to make a number of visits to the Collins's home, where she is staying. One day, he makes a shocking proposal of marriage, which Elizabeth quickly refuses. She tells Darcy that she considers him arrogant and unpleasant, then scolds him for steering Bingley away from Jane and disinheriting Wickham. Darcy leaves her but shortly thereafter delivers a letter to her. In this letter, he admits that he urged Bingley to distance himself from Jane, but claims he did so only because he thought their romance was not serious. As for Wickham, he informs Elizabeth that the young officer is a liar and that the real cause of their disagreement was Wickham's attempt to elope with his young sister, Georgiana Darcy.

This letter causes Elizabeth to reevaluate her feelings about Darcy. She returns home and acts coldly toward Wickham. The militia is leaving town, which makes the younger, rather man-crazy Bennet girls distraught. Lydia manages to obtain permission from her father to spend the summer with an old colonel in Brighton, where Wickham's regiment will be stationed. With the arrival of June, Elizabeth goes on another journey, this time with the Gardiners, who are relatives of the Bennets. The trip takes her to the North and eventually to the neighborhood of Pemberley, Darcy's estate. She visits Pemberley, after making sure that Darcy is away, and delights in the building and grounds, while hearing from Darcy's servants that he is a wonderful, generous master. Suddenly, Darcy arrives and behaves cordially toward her. Making no mention of his proposal, he entertains the Gardiners and invites Elizabeth to meet his sister.

Shortly thereafter, however, a letter arrives from home, telling Elizabeth that Lydia has eloped with Wickham and that the couple is nowhere to be found, which suggests that they may be living together out of wedlock. Fearful of the disgrace such a situation would bring on her entire family, Elizabeth hastens home. Mr. Gardiner and Mr. Bennet go off to search for Lydia, but Mr. Bennet eventually returns home empty-handed. Just when all hope seems lost, a letter comes from Mr. Gardiner saying that the couple has been found and that Wickham has agreed to marry Lydia in exchange for an annual income. The Bennets are convinced that Mr. Gardiner has paid off Wickham, but Elizabeth learns that the source of the money, and of her family's salvation, was none other than Darcy.

Now married, Wickham and Lydia return to Longbourn briefly, where Mr. Bennet treats them coldly. They then depart for Wickham's new assignment in the North of England. Shortly thereafter, Bingley returns to Netherfield and resumes his courtship of Jane. Darcy goes to stay with him and pays visits to the Bennets but makes no mention of his desire to marry Elizabeth. Bingley, on the other hand, presses his suit and proposes to Jane, to the delight of everyone but Bingley's haughty sister. While the family celebrates, Lady Catherine de Bourgh pays a visit to Longbourn. She corners Elizabeth and says that she has heard that Darcy, her nephew, is planning to marry her. Since she considers a Bennet an unsuitable match for a Darcy, Lady Catherine demands that Elizabeth promise to refuse him. Elizabeth spiritedly refuses, saying she is not engaged to Darcy, but she will not promise anything against her own happiness. A little later, Elizabeth and Darcy go out walking together and he tells her that his feelings have not altered since the spring. She tenderly accepts his proposal, and both Jane and Elizabeth are married.



### Characters

**Elizabeth Bennet** - The novel's protagonist. The second daughter of Mr. Bennet, Elizabeth is the most intelligent and sensible of the five Bennet sisters. She is well read and quick-witted, with a tongue that occasionally proves too sharp for her own good. Her realization of Darcy's essential goodness eventually triumphs over her initial prejudice against him.

**Fitzwilliam Darcy** - A wealthy gentleman, the master of Pemberley, and the nephew of Lady Catherine de Bourgh. Though Darcy is intelligent and honest, his excess of pride causes him to look down on his social inferiors. Over the course of the novel, he tempers his class-consciousness and learns to admire and love Elizabeth for her strong character.

**Jane Bennet** - The eldest and most beautiful Bennet sister. Jane is more reserved and gentler than Elizabeth. The easy pleasantness with which she and Bingley interact contrasts starkly with the mutual distaste that marks the encounters between Elizabeth and Darcy.

**Charles Bingley** - Darcy's considerably wealthy best friend. Bingley's purchase of Netherfield, an estate near the Bennets, serves as the impetus for the novel. He is a genial, well-intentioned gentleman, whose easygoing nature contrasts with Darcy's initially discourteous demeanor. He is blissfully uncaring about class differences.

**Mr. Bennet** - The patriarch of the Bennet family, a gentleman of modest income with five unmarried daughters. Mr. Bennet has a sarcastic, cynical sense of humor that he uses to purposefully irritate his wife. Though he loves his daughters (Elizabeth in particular), he often fails as a parent, preferring to withdraw from the never-ending marriage concerns of the women around him rather than offer help.

**Mrs. Bennet** - Mr. Bennet's wife, a foolish, noisy woman whose only goal in life is to see her daughters married. Because of her low breeding and often unbecoming behavior, Mrs. Bennet often repels the very suitors whom she tries to attract for her daughters.

**George Wickham** - A handsome, fortune-hunting militia officer. Wickham's good looks and charm attract Elizabeth initially, but Darcy's revelation about Wickham's disreputable past clues her in to his true nature and simultaneously draws her closer to Darcy.

**Lydia Bennet** - The youngest Bennet sister, she is gossipy, immature, and self-involved. Unlike Elizabeth, Lydia flings herself headlong into romance and ends up running off with Wickham.

**Mr. Collins** - A pompous, generally idiotic clergyman who stands to inherit Mr. Bennet's property. Mr. Collins's own social status is nothing to brag about, but he takes great pains to let everyone and anyone know that Lady Catherine de Bourgh serves as his patroness. He is the worst combination of snobbish and obsequious.

**Miss Bingley** - Bingley's snobbish sister. Miss Bingley bears inordinate disdain for Elizabeth's middle-class background. Her vain attempts to garner Darcy's attention cause Darcy to admire Elizabeth's self-possessed character even more.

**Lady Catherine de Bourgh** - A rich, bossy noblewoman; Mr. Collins's patron and Darcy's aunt. Lady Catherine epitomizes class snobbery, especially in her attempts to order the middle-class Elizabeth away from her well-bred nephew.



**Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner** - Mrs. Bennet's brother and his wife. The Gardiners, caring, nurturing, and full of common sense, often prove to be better parents to the Bennet daughters than Mr. Bennet and his wife.

**Charlotte Lucas** - Elizabeth's dear friend. Pragmatic where Elizabeth is romantic, and also six years older than Elizabeth, Charlotte does not view love as the most vital component of a marriage. She is more interested in having a comfortable home. Thus, when Mr. Collins proposes, she accepts.

**Georgiana Darcy** - Darcy's sister. She is immensely pretty and just as shy. She has great skill at playing the pianoforte.

**Mary Bennet** - The middle Bennet sister, bookish and pedantic.

**Catherine Bennet** - The fourth Bennet sister. Like Lydia, she is girlishly enthralled with the soldiers.

### Key Facts

**FULL TITLE:** *Pride and Prejudice*

**AUTHOR:** Jane Austen

**TYPE OF WORK:** Novel

**GENRE:** Comedy of manners

**LANGUAGE:** English

**NARRATOR:** Third-person omniscient

**TIME AND PLACE WRITTEN:** England, between 1796 and 1813

**DATE OF FIRST PUBLICATION:** 1813

**PUBLISHER:** Thomas Egerton of London

**CLIMAX:** Mr. Darcy's proposal to Elizabeth (Volume III, Chapter XVI)

**PROTAGONIST:** Elizabeth Bennet

**ANTAGONIST:** Snobbish class-consciousness (epitomized by Lady Catherine de Bourgh and Miss Bingley)

**SETTING (TIME):** Some point during the Napoleonic Wars (1797–1815)

**SETTING (PLACE):** Longbourn, in rural England

**POINT OF VIEW:** The novel is primarily told from Elizabeth Bennet's point of view.

**FALLING ACTION:** The two chapters of the novel after Darcy's proposal

**TENSE:** Past tense

**FORESHADOWING:** The only notable example of foreshadowing occurs when Elizabeth visits Pemberley, Darcy's estate, in Volume III, Chapter 1. Her appreciation of the estate foreshadows her eventual realization of her love for its owner.

**tone:** Comic—or, in Jane Austen's own words, "light and bright, and sparkling"

**THEMES:** Love; Reputation; Class

**MOTIFS:** Courtship; Journeys

**SYMBOLS:** The novel is light on symbolism, except on the visit to Pemberley, which is described as being "neither formal, nor falsely adorned," and is clearly meant to symbolize the character of Mr. Darcy.

### Themes in *Pride and Prejudice*

#### **Love**

*Pride and Prejudice* contains one of the most cherished love stories in English literature: the courtship between Darcy and Elizabeth.

#### **Reputation**

*Pride and Prejudice* depicts a society in which a woman's reputation is of the utmost importance. A woman is expected to behave in certain ways. Stepping outside the social norms makes her vulnerable to ostracism. This theme appears in the novel, when Elizabeth walks to Netherfield and arrives with muddy skirts, to the shock of the reputation-conscious Miss Bingley and her friends.

#### **Class**

The theme of class is related to reputation, in that both reflect the strictly regimented nature of life for the middle and upper classes in Regency England. The lines of class are strictly drawn. While the Bennets, who are middle class, may socialize with the upper-class Bingleys and Darcys, they are clearly their social inferiors and are treated as such.

### Essay Questions

#### **1. Critically analyse Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.**

In the last decade of the eighteenth century, the English novel, became the most prolific of all English literary forms and gained immense popularity in England, when Jane Austen began her apprenticeship as a writer. Her name is mainly associated with her novels which comment on love, marriage, and a thorough knowledge of human nature. In the words of Cazamian,

The works of Jane Austen represents in an original way the external comedy of life with all its whims and fancies.

Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* became serious and analytical in her subsequent novels like *Sense and Sensibility*, *Emma*, and *Mansfield Park*. R.A. Austen Leigh says:

It is rather too light, and bright, and sparkling; it wants shade.

The plot is simple and conventional. Mr. and Mrs. Bennet blessed with five daughters live in Longbourn. 'Genteel' by birth Mr. Bennet was a man of sarcastic humour and Mrs. Bennet was a woman of mean understanding, little information. The business of Mrs. Bennet was to get her daughters married. Jane, the first daughter is beautiful, blessed with good temper and cheerfulness of manner while Elizabeth, the second daughter, the heroine, is intelligent and attractive. The Bennet family is constantly reminded of the fact by the mother, that contracting a good marriage is the be-all and end-all of life and the plot revolves round this theme. When the novel comes to an end, both Jane and Elizabeth are married according to their hearts desire. The theme of love and marriage is so well drawn in this novel.

The entire novel centres round the chief qualities of the hero and the heroine, Darcy and Elizabeth respectively. The former represents pride and the latter prejudice. The following lines reveal Darcy's embodiment of pride,

I looked for a moment at Elizabeth, till catching her eye, 'she is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me.

These lines of Darcy exhibits pride and rude remarks of Elizabeth which she overhears, gets offended, and forms a prejudice about him and says,

*Darcy is not so well worth listening as his friend Bingley is.*

This pride leads to reject the proposal of marriage made by Darcy at Huntsford.

But the novel takes a twist when Elizabeth visits Pemberley, removes the prejudice from her mind by reading Darcy's letter which reveals his nobility. Even Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner give a very good account of Darcy. They say,

*He is perfectly well behaved, polite, and unassuming,* says **Uncle**.

*There is something a little stately in him to be sure, though some people call him proud, I have seen nothing in him,* says or replies **Aunt**.

Meanwhile news reaches Elizabeth that her sister Lydia has eloped with Wickham, the son of Steward of Darcy's property, an unprincipled adventurer. By Darcy's help their fugitives are found, and the marriage is brought about, and they are suitably provided. Thus, he saves the prestige of Bennet's family. This paves the way to marry Jane and Bingley.

By the end of the novel both Darcy and Elizabeth are free from their pride and prejudice respectively. Thus, the title is very apt and significant. David Daiches rightly observes:

Jane Austen's novels display a 'thorough knowledge of human nature and have genius, wit'.

David Daiches aptly says,

Austen's novels are picaresque in reverse because all the action and plot developments take place in various private houses and public assemblies.

## **2. Discuss the use of wit and irony in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.**

In 'Pride and Prejudice', the author uses a great deal of wit and irony. Sometimes one hears it in the authorial voice, as in the opening lines of the novel

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.

Authorial comments intrude very little into the story, but when they do, they are often ironic and almost always witty.

Then there is wit and irony as employed by the characters in the novel. Elizabeth and her father are the most witty characters in the novel. Elizabeth, in fact, is noted for her "sparkling wit." Her father's comments are witty and often ironic and the exchanges between the two add much to the enjoyment of the reader. (See for instance the conversation between Elizabeth and her father after Jane had been jilted by Mr. Bingley).

Apart from verbal irony that is apparent in conversations between Elizabeth and Mr. Bennet, there are ironic characters. Mr. Collins, Lady Catherine and Mrs. Bennet fall into

this category. They are ironic because there is a discrepancy between the way they see themselves and the way they appear to the reader.

Then there are ironic situations – as when Fitzwilliam Darcy unwittingly reveals to Elizabeth that Mr. Darcy had been instrumental in separating Jane and Mr. Bingley. This episode is closely followed by the appearance of Mr. Darcy who offers his hand in marriage to Elizabeth – at the precise moment when she is furiously angry with him.

In chapter 14 of *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr. Collins is asked by the Bennets to read a passage from a book to the family. The book the Bennet sisters choose, however, raises little delight on Mr. Collins' part. The girls choose a novel, and, of course, he never reads novels. Instead, he decides to read a chapter from Fordyce's *Sermons to Young Women* to the ladies, since he agrees with Fordyce's impression that "there seem to be very few, in the style of a Novel, that you can read with safety, and yet fewer that you can read with advantage." In Jane Austen's time, the late 18<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, most Englishman shared Mr. Collins' and James Fordyce's opinion. Novels were regarded as useless pieces of literature. They posed a risk to the virtuousness and decorum according to which the members of the English society, especially the female ones, were expected to behave. Writing a novel was regarded as an even worse thing to do than reading one. Hence, in particular the female writers of Austen's time stressed the educational character of their novels, thus meeting the society's expectations. The consequence of this was that most of the novels were riddled with didactic comments and attempts at moral indoctrination, lucidly expressing the religious and virtuous end of their pieces of literature. In contrast to the obtrusive morality of the majority of novels at that time, Austen's pieces of work are strongly marked by an ironic tone, a subtle humour and highly ambivalent statements. This ambivalence and high use of irony makes it, even today, difficult to determine Austen's attitudes towards society and the question whether her novels are to be interpreted as conservative, modern or feminist pieces of literature. Romantic novel, Bildungsroman, comedy of manners and comedy of character are some examples for the various terms Austen's novels have been labeled.

In particular in *Pride and Prejudice*, an ironic tone is predominant throughout the novel. As Kingel Ray states, Austen is "first and foremost a satirist. And for a satirist, irony is the major tool of language." In order to analyse the novel thoroughly and adequately, it is thus of paramount importance to study Austen's use of irony and her intentions and motives behind the ironic statements and events in the novel.